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SIR JOHN TUBBOCK'S HUNDRED BOOKS

47

THOUGHTS
ON
RELIGION
AND OTHER SUBJECTS

WRITTEN ORIGINALLY IN FRENCH

BY

MONSIEUR PASCAL

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

BY

BASIL KENNET, D.D.

LATE PRINCIPAL OF CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, OXON.

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Monsieur Pascal, in his most excellent discourse of the "Misery of Man," tells us that all our endeavours after greatness proceed from nothing but a desire of being surrounded by a multitude of persons and affairs that may hinder us from looking into ourselves, which is a view we cannot bear.

Had that incomparable person Monsieur Pascal been a little more indulgent to himself, the world might probably have enjoyed him much longer; whereas, through too great an application to his studies in his youth, he contracted that ill habit of body, which, after a tedious sickness, carried him off in the fortieth year of his age; and the whole history we have of his life till that time is but one continued account of the behaviour of a noble soul struggling under innumerable pains and distempers.

Vide SPECTATOR, Vol. II., No. 116.

PREFACE,

Giving an account of the manner in which these Thoughts were collected; of the causes that retarded the impression; of the Author's design in this work; and how he spent the latter part of his life.

MONSIEUR PASCAL having taken an early leave of the mathematics, of natural philosophy, and of other human studies, in which he had made so great a progress that there are, undoubtedly, but very few persons who have seen deeper into those subjects which he chose to handle, began when he was about thirty years of age to apply himself to things of a more serious and more elevated character, and to turn his whole thoughts, so far as his health would permit, on the Scriptures, the Fathers, and the discourses of practical Christianity.

But though his excellence in these latter studies, no less than in the former, has been already testified by such works as are acknowledged to be exact and accomplished in their kind, yet we may affirm, that if it had pleased God to have granted him a longer space for the carrying on his general design of the truth of religion, in which he had

resolved to employ the residue of his life, this performance would have been far superior to any that we have received from the same hand ; because his views, in this respect, infinitely exceeded those which he had attained of all things beside.

I believe this is no more than what any one will readily admit, upon the sight of these few papers, with all their imperfections ; especially when he shall be made acquainted with the methods by which the author prosecuted his undertaking, and with the entire history of our drawing out this specimen for the use of the public ; of all which take the following account.

M. Pascal had laid the scheme of this work many years before his death ; and yet we ought not to wonder that he began so late to commit any part of it to writing, for he had always accustomed himself to think very maturely of things, and to range and dispose them in his mind ere he suffered them to venture farther, carefully weighing and examining which ought to be placed first and which last, and what order of the whole might seem most conducible to the desired effect. And then being master of an excellent, or, as we may truly say, a prodigious memory, so as to have often declared that he never forgot anything which he had once imprinted in it, he was under no apprehension of letting those thoughts which he had at any time formed afterwards escape him ; so that it was usual with him to tarry very long before he set them down in paper ; either for want of leisure, or because the state of

his health, which was scarce ever better than crazy and uncertain, could not support a more laborious application.

This was the reason that, at his death, we lost the greatest part of what he had conceived in pursuance of his design. For there was scarce anything left in writing, either as to the principal arguments which he proposed to insist on, or as to the grounds and foundations of the whole work, or as to the method and disposition, which could not but be very considerable. All these were so habitually fixed in his mind, that having neglected to write them while, perhaps, he was able, he at length found himself incapable of going through with the task when he would gladly have entered upon it.

Yet there once happened an occasion, some ten or twelve years since, that obliged him, not indeed to write, but to deliver himself in conversation on this subject, which he did in the presence and at the request of many great persons, his friends. To this company he opened in few words the plan of his whole undertaking ; he represented the subject-matter ; he gave an abstract of the reasons and principles, and pointed out the intended order and sequel of things. And these gentlemen, who are indisputably qualified to be judges in the case, do aver that they never heard anything which discovered more beauty or more strength, which was fitter to move or to convince : they declare themselves to have been charmed with the discourse, and say that the idea which they were able to form of the main design from a narrative of two or three

hours, delivered thus off-hand and without being laboured or premeditated, gave them the pleasure of considering with themselves what the work might one day⁶ prove, if fully executed and carried to its last perfection by an author whose force and capacity they had so often experienced ; one who had used himself to be so indefatigably laborious in all his compositions ; who was scarce ever satisfied with his first thoughts, how happy soever they might seem to others ; and who had been known, on many occasions, to new-model no less than eight or ten times such pieces as any person but himself must have pronounced admirable after a single trial.

Having first observed to them what sort of proofs those are which make the greatest impression upon men's minds, and what are the most proper means of persuasion, he applied himself to demonstrate that the Christian religion had no fewer marks of certainty and evidence than anything which is received in the world for the most undoubted truth.

He began the design with giving the picture of a man, under which he omitted nothing that might distinguish or illustrate him, either without or within, to the most secret motions of his heart. In the next place he supposed a person who had lived hitherto under a general ignorance, and utterly indifferent with regard to all things, to himself especially, to come and view himself in this picture, and by it to examine what he is. The person cannot but be surprised to discover here an infinite variety of things which never yet entered into his thought, nor can without

astonishment and admiration reflect on what he now learns and feels of his dignity and his baseness, of his advantages and his infirmities, of the small glimmering of light which remains within him, and of the miserable darkness with which he is, almost on all sides, encompassed ; in a word, of all the prodigious contrarieties which appear in his nature. After this it is impossible he should continue his indifference, if he has but the least spark of reason ; and how insensible soever he has hitherto been, he must now of necessity desire, when he once knows what he is, to be informed likewise whence he derives his original, and what fate abides him hereafter.

Having brought his man to this good disposition of seeking to be instructed in so important a doubt, he sends him first to the philosophers, and having rehearsed to him the sum of what their greatest professors have delivered on the subject of human nature and condition, he makes him discover so many failures and weaknesses, so many falsities and contradictions in all that they advance, as to judge very easily that these are not the men who must give him satisfaction.

At the next remove he leads him the whole circuit of all nations and all ages, so as to give him a view of the almost endless variety of religions in the world ; but at the same time lets him understand, by the strongest and most convictive proofs, all these religions are so full of vanity and folly, of error and extravagance, as to afford nothing in which his mind may acquiesce and repose itself.

At length he bids him fix his eye on the people of the Jews, where the circumstances he is presented with are so extraordinary as to engage and employ his whole attention. Having let him into all that was singular in this nation, he stops him to take particular notice of one book, by which they entirely govern themselves, and which contains the sum of their religion, their history, and their law. Upon the first opening of this book he is informed that the world is the work of God, and that it was the same God who created man in His own image, and endowed him with all advantages of mind and body suitable to so high an estate. This truth, though it doth not at present convince him, yet fails not to please him ; his bare reason being sufficient to discover a greater probability in the supposing God to be Author of the world and of mankind than in any of those accounts which men have framed by their own fond invention. The only thing which gives him any doubt is that he observes man, according to the picture he so lately viewed, to be very far from possessing all those advantages which must need have attended him when he came out of the hand of his Maker. But he soon gets over this difficulty, because upon looking a little farther into the same book, he discovers that after man had been thus created by God in a state of innocence and perfection, his very first act was to rebel against his Creator, and to employ all the gifts he had received from Him in opposing and offending Him.

M. Pascal proceeds to inform his novice that this crime having been in all its circumstances the greatest that could

be committed, received its punishment, not only in the first man, whom, from his state of excellency and happiness, it plunged at one stroke into misery and weakness, into blindness and error, but likewise in all his descendants, to whom he communicated his corruption, and will continue to communicate it through all ages.

And now obliging him to peruse several other parts of the book which furnished him with this truth, he makes him observe that there is scarce anything recorded of man but what bears a regard to this his condition of infirmity and disorder ; that it is often said, all flesh have corrupted themselves, and that men are described as abandoning themselves to their own senses, and as having, from their very birth, an inclination and tendency to evil. He farther lets him see, that this primitive defection is the source, not only of all those incomprehensible contrarieties in human nature, but likewise of infinite other effects in the things without us, of which he could never before trace the cause. In short, he exhibits to him such a portrait of man, in the whole series of this book, as, by answering to the piece which he first beheld, cannot but satisfy him of its true and just resemblance.

Having thus brought him acquainted with his real condition, full of misery and grief, he assures him that by following the guidance of the same book he will be led into the hopes of comfort and deliverance. He points out to him the several passages where it is affirmed that the remedy of all our evils is in the hand of God ; that His

assistance we ought to have recourse to for obtaining the strength we want; that He will permit Himself to be prevailed upon by our entreaty, and will even send us a Saviour to satisfy for our offences, to repair our breaches, and to heal our infirmities.

After many other peculiar remarks on this book, he engages him to consider that it is the only book in the world which has spoken worthily of the Supreme Being, and has inspired a just idea of religion. In order to which, having made him conceive some of the most sensible tokens and characters of the true religion, he compares them with those which are here delivered; teaching him to reflect, with more especial attention, that this religion placeth the perfection of divine worship in the love of God; a character altogether singular, and such as distinguisheth it visibly from all others, which are convicted of notorious falsehood by their want of this essential mark.

Thus far he leads the man, whom by these insensible means he proposeth to make his convert, without offering at any arguments to demonstrate those truths which he has taught him to discover. But then, he has fully prepared him to receive them with delight and complacency, so soon as they shall be demonstrated to his understanding; and even to wish, with the greatest earnestness, that they may at length appear to be solid and well-grounded; because he finds that they supply so many assistances towards the clearing up of his doubts and the ensuring of his repose. This, indeed, is the very desire which every rational man

ought to entertain upon the view of the several particulars which M. Pascal has thus represented ; and it was but just for him to think that any person under such a disposition would yield a ready assent to the proofs he should afterwards allege in confirmation of those important truths which he had before mentioned, and which are the foundation of Christian belief, as the enforcement of this belief was the sole aim of his discourse.

To speak a word or two concerning these proofs. After he had observed in general that the points which he now asserted were all contained in a written volume, the authority of which every man of sound judgment must own to be unquestionable, he insisted chiefly on the writings of Moses, where the said points are in a particular manner revealed ; and he made it apparent, from many undoubted circumstances, that it was alike impossible, either for Moses to have penned a whole series of falsities, or for the Jewish nation to have suffered the cheat if he had been inclined to act it.

He argued farther from the great and surprising miracles recorded in this book of religion ; which as they are the highest evidence, if true, so he demonstrated, that they could not possibly be false ; not only from the authority of these writings in which they are attested, but likewise from all the particulars which accompany them, and which set them beyond all suspicion and dispute.

He proceeded to evince that the whole economy of the ritual law was purely figurative ; that all the dispensations

and promises to the Jewish state were but the shadows of good things, which received their accomplishment from the appearance of the Messias; and that after the veil was once taken away, they visibly conspired, and were consummated, in the behalf of those who believed in Jesus Christ at His coming.

The next reason offered by M. Pascal for the credibility of religion was taken from the prophecies—a subject on which he enlarged more than on any other. As he had been very laborious in this inquiry, and had obtained very particular views of the respective predictions, so he opened them after the most intelligible manner, explained their design and their event with a wonderful facility, and placed them in all their force and light.

At length, having run through the books of the Old Testament, and intermixed, upon occasion, many convincing remarks admirably serviceable to the foundations of religion, he entered on the consideration of the New Testament, in order to the completing the whole argument by the truth and reality of the Gospel.

He began with our Lord Himself, whose character and commission, though it was invincibly attested by the prophecies and by all the figures of the law, which had their perfect consummation in Him alone, yet he farther illustrated by many evidences drawn from His person His miracles, His doctrine, and the circumstances of His life.

Hence he descended to the character of the Apostles; and that he might establish the certainty of that faith

which they so resolutely and so universally preached, having laid it down for a principle, that they cannot be accused of falsehood but upon one of these two suppositions —either that they were themselves deceived, or that they were engaged in a design of deceiving others —he made it evident that both these suppositions were alike absurd and impossible.

In fine, he passed by nothing that might confirm the truth of the evangelical history, inserting many admirable reflections on the Gospel itself, on the style and person of the Evangelists, on the Apostles particularly, and on their writings; on the astonishing number of miracles, on the example of the saints, and on all the methods which contributed to the final establishment of Christianity. And though, in a single discourse, he wanted time for the full improvement of so vast a subject, which he reserved for his intended work, yet he offered enough to evince that all this could not be the contrivance and achievement of men; and that it was God alone who was able thus to guide the issue of so many different occurrences, as to make them all conspire in giving an irresistible testimony to that religion which He Himself came to settle amongst men.

This was the substance of M. Pascal's conversation, which he proposed only as a sketch of his great undertaking: and it was by the favour of one of the gentlemen there present that we have since obtained these short memorials of what he delivered at that time.

In the fragments here published we see something of the vast design conceived by our author ; yet we see but little, and even this little comes to us after so imperfect a manner, neither carried to its just height, nor digested in its proper order, that it can afford us but a very obscure idea of the perfection which he would have given it in his finished performance.

The reader will not think it strange if, in these few relics which are preserved, the disposition of the subjects is not made according to the primitive method. For there being so little found which had any dependence or connection, the publishers thought it utterly useless to be confined to this intended series, and therefore were satisfied with keeping as near as they could to such an order as seemed most convenient in respect of the fragments themselves. It is also hoped that there are but few persons who, upon forming a general notion of M. Pascal's design, will not supply by their own judgment the defect of this disposition ; and who, after an attentive regard to the different matters here displayed, will not, in some measure, conceive how they stand related, according to the original idea of the author.

Might we be so happy as to see a perfect transcript of the forementioned discourse, in the same order in which it was delivered, we should have somewhat to comfort us under our loss of the greater work, of which we should by this means enjoy some imperfect model. But it pleased God to deprive us of both these benefits. For M. Pascal

fell soon after into a languishing distemper, which held him during the four last years of his life ; and which, though it did not betray itself by many outward signs, nor oblige him to be a prisoner to his bed or his chamber, yet very much incommoded him, and, in a manner, rendered him incapable of applying himself to business of any kind ; insomuch that the chief care and employment of those about him was to hinder him from writing, and even from speaking of anything which required intention and force of spirit, and to entertain him only with indifferent things, and such as could no way disorder or fatigue him.

Yet it was in these four years of weakness that he framed and penned all that he left behind on this subject, and all that is here made public. For though he waited till his health should be fully re-established and confirmed to set upon the work in good earnest, and to commit exactly to writing what he had so well digested and disposed in his mind ; yet when there occurred to him any thought, any view, any idea, or even any turn of expression, which he saw might one day prove serviceable to his design—the condition he was now under not suffering him to attend them so closely as before his illness, nor to fix them with so much strength and steadfastness in his memory—he chose to preserve them by the help of some short notes. In order to this, he took the first remnant of paper that came to hand, and entered what he was then meditating in a very few words, and often in but half a word ; for he writ purely for his own use, and therefore was content to perform it very

slightly, and so as not to discompose his temper, barely setting down those hints which were necessary for the recalling to his mind the ideas he had once conceived.

This was the way in which M. Pascal penned his thoughts. And I believe there is no man, who, from these slight beginnings, these feeble essays of a sick person, that writ only for himself, and writ those things only which he was afraid might otherwise be lost, and which he never afterwards touched or revised, will not make some guess what the entire work must have been, had the author perfectly recovered, and found opportunity to give it his last hand : he who had the art of placing things in so goodly an order and in so fair a light ; who gave so particular, so noble, and raised a turn to all that he said ; who designed that this performance should be more laboured than all his former pieces ; who had resolved to employ in it his whole strength of genius, and all the talents which God had given him ; and who had many times declared that it would require ten years of sound health to bring it to perfection.

It being well known that M. Pascal had engaged himself in the cause of religion, great care was used at his death to collect all his writings on this subject. They were found all together tied up in several bundles, but without order or connection ; because, as we before observed, these were but the rude expressions of his thoughts, which he set down in broken papers as they occasionally offered themselves. And then the whole was so imperfect, and so very ill written, that it seemed no ordinary labour could barely decipher it.

The first thing that was done was to get the papers copied, such as they were at present, and with the same confusion in which they lay. But when this was performed, and the fragments more easily perused and examined in the copy than in the author's manuscript, they appeared at first view so indigested, so little pursued, and for the most part so obscure, that it was very long ere the parties concerned were brought to entertain any design of printing them ; though frequently urged by persons of the greatest note, with the most pressing instances and solicitations ; because they well understood that they should not answer the expectation, and fill up the idea which had been long conceived of the undertaking, by sending abroad these remains under so manifest disadvantages.

At length they found themselves obliged to give way to the desire and impatience which almost all the world seemed daily to express. And they were the rather prevailed upon to give their consent, because they hoped that the readers would have so much justice as to distinguish between a finished performance and the first lines of a piece, and to guess at the beauty of the work by the rudest and most imperfect draught. The publication thereof was resolved upon ; but there being several ways of executing it, some time was again spent in considering which to take.

The most obvious, and without doubt the most easy manner, was to let them be printed in all respects as they were found. But it was soon perceived that this would

entirely obstruct all the use and benefit that might otherwise be promised from them; because those thoughts which seemed to be more finished and more connected, to be expressed with greater clearness and carried to a better head, being intermixed and almost overwhelmed with so many others which were imperfect, obscure, unwrought, and some of them utterly unintelligible to any but the author, there was good reason to apprehend that the latter would highly prejudice the former, and that this volume of broken meditations, which must swell to so great and so very unprofitable a bulk, could be only looked on as a confused mass, without order, dependence, or use.

There was another way of publishing these relics, and that was to spend some labour upon them before they went to the press, in illustrating such reflections as were obscure, finishing those that were imperfect, and in carrying on the design of the author through all the fragments, so as, in a great measure, to accomplish the work which he had begun. This method was evidently the most perfect, but then it was exceedingly difficult to be pursued. However, the thing stopped here for a time, and some steps were actually made towards the performance. Yet it was at last resolved to reject this expedient as well as the former, it being considered that it was a thing next to impossible to fall regularly into the measures of an author, especially of a deceased author; and that this would not be to present the world with M. Pascal's offspring, but with somewhat of a quite different complexion and constitution.

To avoid the inconvenience of both these proposals, a middle way was found, which has been here followed by the publishers. They have only selected from the whole number of scattered thoughts such as they judged to be the most finished and most intelligible; and these they have presented to the world without addition or alteration, excepting that whereas they lay before confusedly dispersed, without order and dependence, they are now put into some kind of method, and reduced under common heads, agreeably to their respective subjects. As for all those which were too imperfect or obscure, it was determined entirely to suppress them.

Not but that there were many admirable reflections of this latter kind, and such as might afford very noble views if thoroughly apprehended. But as it had been a settled rule that no endeavours should be used towards illustrating and completing them, so in their present condition they must have been wholly useless. I shall produce one example to furnish the reader with such an idea as may assist him in forming a judgment of the rest. The reflection, as we found it in the author's own words, is as follows: "A mechanic speaking of riches; a solicitor speaking of war, or of regal state, etc. But the rich discourse well of riches; a king speaks coldly of a vast present which he is about to make; and God discourses well of God."

This fragment contains a most excellent thought; but such as few, perhaps, will be able to penetrate, because it appears so intricate, abrupt, and concise, that if the author

had not frequently delivered himself to the same purpose in conversation with his friends, it would have been no easy task to retrieve it from so confused and perplexed an expression. Let us examine it more nearly, and observe where the secret beauty is concealed.

M. Pascal had made a great number of very particular observations on the style of the Holy Scriptures, of the Gospel especially, and had discerned many excellences, which, perhaps, none ever reached before him. Amongst other things, he was wont to admire the native simplicity, and, if we may so term it, the coldness and unconcernedness with which our Lord seemed to speak of the greatest and most important subjects ; as, for instance, of the Kingdom of God, of the glory of the saints in Heaven, and of the pains of hell, without dilating upon these topics, as the Fathers and all other writers are observed to do. And he said the true reason of this difference was that the particulars before-mentioned though infinitely noble and sublime in respect of us, were by no means so in respect of Jesus Christ, and that therefore it was natural for Him to speak of them without astonishment or admiration ; as we hear a general speaking of the siege of some place of consequence, or of his success in a mighty battle, without being moved or affected ; or as a king expresseth himself with indifference about a sum of many thousands, which a private person, or a mechanic, could not name without the highest exaggerations.

This is the thought which is really couched under those

few words of the fragment now recited ; and this consideration added to many of the like nature, cannot fail of supplying ~~national~~ and sober men with an argument for our Lord's divinity.

I am persuaded that this one instance may be sufficient, not only for a standard in judging of almost all the other fragments which have been retrenched, but likewise for a proof of the little application, and even the negligence, with which the greatest part of M. Pascal's remains were written. And as this will justify what was before asserted, that the author writ them, in effect, for none but himself, and without the least apprehension of their appearing abroad in this dress, so it is hoped it may, in some measure, excuse the failures with which they come attended.

If in the present collection the reader shall still meet with some thoughts which are not altogether free from obscurity, I, believe that as his attention will soon render them intelligible, so it will engage him to confess that they are no less happy than others, and that it was better to present them under their own sententious brevity than to explain them by a multitude of words, which would only have rendered them faint and languishing, and would have defeated one of their principal graces—the saying much in little compass.

An instance of this kind we have in the chapter entitled, “The Proofs of Jesus Christ by the Prophecies,” where the author expresses himself in the following terms : “The prophets have interwoven particular prophecies with

those concerning the Messias : that neither the prophecies concerning the Messias should be without their proof, nor the particular prophecies without their fruit.' In this fragment he gives the reason why the prophets, whose eyes were fixed on the Messias only, and who, in all appearance, ought to have foretold nothing but what bore a relation to Him, do yet frequently insert other matters which seem to be indifferent and unprofitable to their design. Which, he tells us, was done that these particular events being accomplished day by day in the eyes of all the world exactly as they were foretold, the authors of them might be incontestably acknowledged as prophets ; and, consequently, none might doubt of the truth and certitude of their predictions concerning the Messias ; so that by this means, as, on the one hand, the prophecies which regarded the Messias in some sort derived their evidence and authority from the particular prophecies which were thus manifestly verified, so, on the other hand, these particular prophecies, serving in such a manner to evince and authorise those which regarded the Messias, were not without their fruit and benefit. This is the sense of the above-mentioned passage in its true light and just extent. But there is no man who will not take a much greater pleasure and satisfaction in opening it himself, than in finding it thus cleared and unravelled to his hand.

I think it not impertinent, in order to the undeceiving certain persons who may possibly expect to meet here with geometrical proofs and demonstrations of the existence of

God, the immortality of the soul, and many other articles of Christian faith, to assure them that this was never the design of the author. He proposed to evince these truths of religion, not by demonstrations founded on self-evident principles, and therefore able to overcome the obstinacy of the most hardened infidel; nor by metaphysical reasons, which very often rather unsettle than persuade the mind; nor by commonplaces drawn from the divers effects of nature, but by moral arguments which operate more on the will than on the understanding: that is, he resolved to make it his chief aim rather to dispose and engage the heart than to convince and subdue the judgment; because he knew that the passions and vicious inclinations which corrupt the will, are the greatest obstacles and prejudices which we labour under; and that if these were once removed out of the way the understanding would not long resist the light and assurance of faith.

Thus much will be easily observed from the following papers. But the author has declared himself more expressly on this point in one of the fragments which remain unpublished. "I shall not here," says he, "undertake to prove by natural reasons, either the existence of God, or the mystery of the Holy Trinity, or the immortality of the soul, or any other truth of the same order; not only because I think myself unable to produce any such argument from nature as shall evince a settled atheist, but because all such knowledge without Jesus Christ is unprofitable and barren. After a man was perfectly well persuaded that the proportions

of numbers are really immaterial, eternal truths, depending on the first and original truth in which they subsist, and which is no other than God, I should think him but very little advanced in the affair of his salvation."

Some, again, may be surprised to find in this collection so great a diversity of thoughts, many of which seem very remote from the subject that M. Pascal undertook to illustrate. But it ought to be considered that his design was really of a larger extent than we may imagine, and not levelled barely against atheistical persons, nor against those who deny some fundamental article of faith. The great love and singular veneration which he had for religion made him impatient, not only when he saw it directly struck at, but when it was in the least degree corrupted or impaired. Insomuch that he professedly opposed himself to all those who attacked it either in its truth or in its holiness ; that is, not only atheists, infidels, and heretics, who refuse to submit their false lights of reason to the evidence of faith, but even to such Christians and Catholics as, though they continue within the pale of the Church, yet do not conform their lives to the purity of the Gospel maxims, which are proposed to us as the measure and rule of all our actions.

This was his design, and this was great and ample enough to take in the main of what is here collected. Yet the reader will meet with some observations which have no dependence on it, and which, indeed, were never conceived under such a relation ; as, for instance, the greatest part of

those in the chapter of "Miscellaneous Thoughts," which were likewise found amongst the papers of M. Pascal, and which were therefore permitted to accompany the rest, because the book is not now given to the world barely as a refutation of atheism or a discourse upon religion, but as a collection of M. Pascal's thoughts on religion and other subjects.

I think there is nothing behind in this preface but to say somewhat of the author, now we have done speaking of his work. Such an addition may not only seem just and proper, but may likewise turn to excellent use by showing us how M. Pascal first entered into that esteem for religion and these sentiments about it, which engaged him to form the model of so great an undertaking.

In the preface to his treatises of "The Equilibrium of Liquors and of the Gravity of the Air," a brief relation has been already given of the manner in which he passed his childhood; of the vast progress made by him, with the greatest celerity, in all the parts of human and profane knowledge to which he applied himself, especially in the mathematics; of the strange and surprising method by which he was taught this last science at the age of eleven or twelve; of the little works which he would then compose, and which always appeared far above the strength and capacity of those years; of the prodigious and astonishing force of his genius, discovered in his arithmetical instrument, which he invented between nineteen and twenty; and, in fine, of his curious experiments about a vacuum, performed at Rouen, in the presence of the most

considerable persons of that city, where he resided for some time, while his father was employed there in the King's service as Intendant of Justice. So that I shall not repeat what was then said, but only represent in a few words by what means he was at length induced to despise all these things, and with what kind of spirit he passed his concluding years ; by which he no less evidenced the greatness and solidity of his piety and virtue, than he had before demonstrated the force, the extent, and the admirable penetration of his judgment.

He had, by the particular providence of God, been preserved from those vices into which young gentlemen are so often betrayed ; and, what seemed very extraordinary in so nice and inquisitive a genius, he was never disposed to scepticism in religious matters, having always confined his curiosity to natural things. He has often said that he owed this obligation, amongst many others, to his excellent father, who, having himself the most profound veneration for religion, took care to instil the same into him from his infancy, giving him this for a maxim, that whatever is the object of faith cannot be the object of reason, and therefore ought much less to bow and submit to it.

These instructions, frequently repeated to him by a father for whom he had the highest respect, and in whom he observed a general knowledge, joined with a strong and piercing judgment, made so deep an impression on his spirit that he was never inclined to the least doubt by the discourses which he heard from libertines, whom, with so

early a discernment, he looked upon as men guided by this false principle, that human reason is above all things, and as those who were utter strangers to the nature of faith.

But having passed his youthful days in such employments and diversions as appear very innocent to the eyes of the world, it pleased God so to touch his heart as to let him perfectly understand that the Christian religion obligeth us to live for God only, and to propose no other object or aim. And this truth appeared to him so evident, so useful, and so necessary, that it made him enter on a resolution of retiring and disengaging himself by degrees from all his worldly dependencies, to attend wholly on this one design.

He had, indeed, taken up such a desire of privacy and of devoting himself to a more holy and Christian life while very young ; and this had before moved him entirely to abandon all profane studies, in order to the giving himself to those only which might be serviceable to his own salvation and to that of others. But the continual illnesses into which he fell diverted him many years from his purpose, and retarded the full execution of it till he arrived at the age of thirty.

It was then that he began to labour in it with all his force ; and that he might the more easily obtain his wish and cut off all his engagements at one stroke, he changed his lodgings and soon after removed into the country ; whence returning after some time, he so well testified his resolution of forsaking the world that, in fine, the world

forsook him. The conduct and regulation of his privacy he established on these two principal maxims, to renounce all pleasure and all superfluity; on these he ever fixed his eye, studying to make nearer advances towards them, and to attain every day new degrees of perfection. ^{2,689}

It was his continual application to these two noble maxims that enabled him to sustain, with so exemplary a patience, all his sickness and sufferings, which scarce left him free from pain during his life. It was this that enjoined him to practise so rigorous and severe a mortification towards himself, not only denying his senses whatever was agreeable to them, but taking without uneasiness or disgust, and even with joy and satisfaction, anything that might seem distasteful, when it was proper either as nourishment or as physic. It was this that engaged him to retrench, every day, what he judged not absolutely necessary, either in clothes, or food, or furniture, or in any other accommodation. It was this that inspired him with so great and ardent a love for poverty, as to make it the ruling thought of his mind, so that he never undertook anything till he had first asked himself whether poverty was consistent with such a proposal; and on all occasions expressed so much tenderness and affection towards the poor as never to refuse an alms, and many times to bestow very largely on a charitable account, though out of his own necessary subsistence. It was from this that he could not bear any nicety in providing things for his convenience or use; and that he so much blamed the humour of searching

after curiosities, and the desire of excelling in all things, as of employing the very best artists, of having everything made in the newest fashion, and many other fancies, which are wont to be gratified without scruple because they are looked upon as harmless, though to him they bore a quite different aspect. To conclude, it was this that prompted him to perform a great number of most remarkable and most Christian actions, which I forbear here to relate, that I may not seem tedious, and because I attempt not to compose a life, but only to convey some idea of the piety and virtue of M. Pascal to those who had not the happiness of his acquaintance. For, as for those who knew him, and who were admitted to his company during his latter years, as I do not take upon me to inform them by what I write, so I doubt not but they will testify in my behalf that I might still have enlarged on many worthy particulars, which I have now chosen to pass over in silence.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE thoughts which make up this book having been composed and written by M. Pascal, after the manner reported in the preface—that is, as they happened to come into his mind, without sequel or order—the reader cannot suppose that he shall find any great regularity in the chapters of this collection, which consist for the most part of many independent thoughts, ranged together under the same heads for no other reason but because there appeared some kind of affinity between their subjects. But though from the bare reading of any paragraph it might with ease be determined whether it be a continuation of that which preceded, or whether it belongs to a new design, yet for the more convenience it was judged proper to make use of some particular mark of distinction. Those paragraphs, therefore, which have an asterisk (*) prefixed to them will be known to be such as are of a quite different piece, and entirely separate from the foregoing. And those which want this mark will as easily be known to make but one and the same discourse, and to have been found in this very order and method amongst the author's original papers.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

As the name of M. Pascal is dear to all who have the happiness to be affected with what is either profound in knowledge or exact in wit, so the design and manner of the following work are displayed at large in the excellent preface of those friends, by whose care it was made public. Yet the translator being obliged to offer some excuses for himself, is contented to premise some recommendations of his author, wishing those may appear as just as these will prove unnecessary.

In the main attempt, we are shown what the greatest genius could do on the greatest subject; for though the draught is far from being finished, yet it consists entirely of master-strokes, and therefore may the more easily be dispensed with for the want of colouring and shade.

To consider some of the principal parts. The most rational and most pathetic addresses to the sceptics demonstrate, that were the utmost latitude indulged to these men till they should be lost in their privilege of free-thinking, they could not otherwise recover and come to themselves but by settling upon the foundations of faith, which is as

natural a cure for the wanderings of reason as reason itself is for the extravagancies of imagination ; and that the only cause why so many have miscarried in this adventure has been their want of strength to go through the course, and to ride out that storm which vice or rashness had brought upon their faculties. It will be observed that in one essay against this spirit of indifference, the author has proceeded upon the supposition of his adversaries, and has evinced that if reason (as is pretended) were doubtful in the case, yet prudence ought to incline to the safer side. But it should likewise be observed that a peculiar advertisement is prefixed to that chapter, and that this was a way of arguing which M. Pascal or his friends confessed to stand in need of an apology.

The metaphysical speculations seem most refined and accomplished, not only for their surprising novelty, and for the engaging manner in which they are delivered, but chiefly on account of those more sublime views in which they terminate and conspire. For it is absurd to condemn the jejuncness of the ancients in this science, if our reasonings be as heathenish as their language was barbarous ; and if instead of the dry trunks of their terms and distinctions (which, being rightly transplanted, we might improve into useful fruit) we cultivate an unprofitable elegance, and under all the verdure of expression betray a barrenness of thought : which is yet the case of these abstracted doctrines when raised upon principles merely human, upon that wisdom which is earthly and cometh of

the earth, but is not watered from above or mingled with the fountains of truth; whereas, therefore, some professing this retired knowledge have much impaired the credit of their labours by seeming to derogate from that of the Holy Scripture; M. Pascal, by his accurate knowledge of its harmony and agreement, his peculiar discernment of prophecies and miracles, and his singular art of illustrating and comparing different texts, has made it appear venerable, even to such as are not wont to read it with his sincerity of intention and his truly Christian heart.

How useful are those curious inquiries concerning the extent and divisibility of matter and the powers of numbers (of which the author had so vast a comprehension) in rendering the mysteries of nature subservient to those of faith, in abasing the pride of our understanding, and in ascribing glory to Him who alone is truly infinite, and who, while He has given us ability to make and compare these seeming infinities, does yet present us with something even in these, which is much more unfathomable to our perfections than commensurate to His own? How may the reflections upon mankind, so sprightly and vigorous, so penetrating and sensible, invite us to observe that the sentence which the wisest of men so long since pronounced on mortal vanity has been most strongly confirmed by those who have made the nearest approaches to his wisdom; and that, as he resolved the whole matter (all that was good or great in life) into the fearing God and keeping His commandments, so these have centred all their contempla-

tions in religious belief and practice, as the only things which can restore the credit of our nature and reconcile us to our own good opinion? How do the thoughts upon death exalt the consolations of philosophy into the hope and assurance of religion? Did Æmilius, or Cato, or Tully deliver themselves with so composed gravity and yet so tender affection on the loss of their children as M. Pascal has done on that of his father? Or was he not, indeed, an early proficient in that better school and discipline which alone could make him wiser than the ancients, and give him more understanding than those teachers and examples? Lastly, does he not, in the chapter of "Miscellaneous Thoughts," discover the same true relish of what is just and natural in style and behaviour as before of what is deep and solid in reason? And does not the prayer annexed, by evincing that this great and universal capacity was animated by a true spirit of humility and devotion, seem equally proper to complete his character and his works?

The translator, having been almost insensibly engaged in this delightful task, was afterwards induced to communicate the satisfaction; knowing there were still many persons of learning and judgment who continued strangers to the language of the original, either as neglecting so easy a conquest, or as despising an attainment which is now become rather vulgar than fashionable.

How much soever the performance may have suffered for want of those advantages which were peculiar to the

author, yet it is here presented entire, excepting some lines which directly favoured the distinguishing doctrines of those of the Roman Communion. If that excellent person thought fit to pay this submission to the authority of his own Church, we cannot be injurious to him in expressing the like veneration for ours. But considering the great liberty with which these fragments were put together, it is not wholly improbable that M. Pascal's friends might officially insert some marks of this kind to prove him (in their notion) a good Catholic, and to shelter his memory from the odium of some, whom in another admirable book ("Lettres aux Provinciaux") he had proved not to be very good Christians. Yet, as to any such passages, it is not so generous to dispute the manner of their coming in as to be satisfied with the power of leaving them out.

At the beginning of the French editions we commonly meet with the large Approbations of the bishops and clergy; and at the end with two discourses, one on this piece, the other on the proofs of the Books of Moses. The former, as they are not here needful, so in some respect they might have seemed prejudicial. The latter would have passed with reputation, had they not the disadvantage of appearing with M. Pascal's compositions, which is yet, perhaps, a greater praise than the translator could obtain, should he now enlarge his preface to a treatise on his author's arguments.

THOUGHTS ON RELIGION.

I.

AGAINST AN ATHEISTICAL INDIFFERENCE.

It were to be wished that the enemies of religion would at least bring themselves to apprehend its nature before they opposed its authority. Did religion make its boast of beholding God with a clear and perfect view, and of possessing Him without covering or veil, the argument would bear some colour when men should allege that none of the things about them do indeed afford this pretended evidence and this degree of light. But since religion, on the contrary, represents men as in a state of darkness and of estrangement from God; since it affirms Him to have withdrawn Himself from their discovery, and to have chosen, in His Word, the very style and appellation of *Deus absconditus*; lastly, since it employs itself alike in establishing these two maxims, that God has left in His Church certain characters of Himself, by which they who sincerely seek Him shall not fail of a sensible conviction, and yet that He has, at the same time, so far shaded and obscured these characters as to

render them imperceptible to those who do not seek Him with their whole heart, what advantage is it to men who profess themselves negligent in the search of truth to complain so frequently that nothing reveals and displays it to them? For this very obscurity under which they labour, and which they make an exception against the Church, does itself evince one of the two grand points which the Church maintains (without affecting the other), and is so far from overthrowing its doctrines as to lend them a manifest confirmation and support.

If they would give their objections any strength, they ought to urge that they have applied their utmost endeavour, and have used all means of information, even those which the Church recommends, without satisfaction. Did they express themselves thus, they would indeed attack religion in one of its chief pretensions; but I hope to show in the following papers that no rational person can speak after this manner, and I dare assert that none ever did. We know very well how men under this indifferency of spirit behave themselves in the case. They suppose themselves to have made the mightiest effort towards the instruction of their minds when they have spent some hours in reading the Scriptures, and have asked some questions of a clergyman concerning the Articles of Faith. When this is done, they declare to all the world that they have consulted books and men without success. I shall be excused if I refrain not from telling such men (what I have often told them) that this

neglect of theirs is insupportable. It is not a foreign or a petty interest which is here in debate; we are ourselves the parties, and all our hopes and fortunes are the depending stake.

The immortality of the soul is a thing which so deeply concerns, so infinitely imports us, that we must have utterly lost our feeling to be altogether cold and remiss in our inquiries about it. And all our actions or designs ought to bend so very different a way, according as we are either encouraged or forbidden to embrace the hope of eternal rewards, that it is impossible for us to proceed with judgment and discretion otherwise than as we keep this point always in view, which ought to be our ruling object and final aim.

Thus is it our highest interest, no less than our principal duty, to get light into a subject on which our whole conduct depends. And therefore, in the number of wavering and unsatisfied men, I make the greatest difference imaginable between those who labour with all their force to obtain instruction and those who live without giving themselves any trouble, or so much as any thought in this affair.

I cannot but be touched with a hearty compassion for those who sincerely groan under this dissatisfaction; who look upon it as the greatest of misfortunes, and who spare no pains to deliver themselves from it by making these researches their chief employment and most serious study. But as for those who pass their life without re-

flecting on its issue, and who, for this reason alone, because they find not in themselves a convincing testimony, refuse to seek it elsewhere, and to examine to the bottom whether the opinion proposed be such as we are wont to entertain by popular simplicity and credulity, or as such, though obscure in itself, yet is built on solid and immovable foundations, I consider them after quite another manner. The carelessness which they betray in an affair where their person, their interest, their whole eternity is embarked, rather provokes my resentment than engages my pity. Nay, it strikes me with amazement and astonishment; it is a monster to my apprehension. I speak not this as transported with the pious zeal of a spiritual and rapturous devotion; on the contrary, I affirm that the love of ourselves, the interest of mankind, and the most simple and artless reason do naturally inspire us with these sentiments; and that to see thus far is not to exceed the sphere of unrefined, uneducated men.

It requires no great elevation of soul to observe that nothing in this world is productive of true contentment; that our pleasures are vain and fugitive, our troubles innumerable and perpetual; and that after all, death, which threatens us every moment, must in the compass of a few years—perhaps of a few days—put us into the eternal condition of happiness, or misery, or nothing. Between us and these three great periods or states, no barrier is interposed but life, the most brittle thing in all nature; and the happiness of heaven being certainly not

designed for those who doubt whether they have an immortal part to enjoy it, such persons have nothing left but the miserable chance of annihilation or of hell.

There is not any reflection which can have more reality than this, as there is none which has greater terror. Let us set the bravest face on our condition, and play the heroes as artfully as we can; yet see here the issue which attends the goodliest life upon earth.

It is in vain for men to turn aside their thoughts from this eternity which awaits them, as if they were able to destroy it by denying it a place in their imagination. It subsists in spite of them, it advanceth unobserved; and death, which is to draw the curtain from it, will in a short time infallibly reduce them to the dreadful necessity of being for ever nothing or for ever miserable.

We have here a doubt of the most affrighting consequence, and which, therefore, to entertain may be well esteemed the most grievous of misfortunes; but at the same time it is our indispensable duty not to lie under it without struggling for deliverance.

He, then, who doubts and yet seeks not to be resolved is equally unhappy and unjust; but if withal he appears easy and composed, if he freely declares his indifference, nay, if he takes a vanity in professing it, and seems to make this most deplorable condition the subject of his pleasure and joy, I have not words to fix a name on so extravagant a creature. Where is the very possibility of entering into these thoughts and resolutions? What

delight is there in expecting misery without end ? What vanity in finding one's self encompassed with impenetrable darkness ? Or what consolation in despairing for ever of a comforter ?

To sit down with some sort of acquiescence under so fatal an ignorance is a thing unaccountable beyond all expression ; and they who live with such a disposition ought to be made sensible of its absurdity and stupidity by having their inward reflections laid open to them, that they may grow wise by the prospect of their own folly. For behold how men are wont to reason while they obstinately remain thus ignorant of what they are, and refuse all methods of instruction and illumination.

Who has sent me into the world I know not ; what the world is I know not, nor what I am myself. I am under an astonishing and terrifying ignorance of all things. I know not what my body is, what my senses, or my soul : this very part of me which thinks what I speak, which reflects upon everything else, and even upon itself, yet is as mere a stranger to its own nature as the dullest thing I carry about me. I behold these frightful spaces of the universe with which I am encompassed, and I find myself chained to one little corner of the vast extent, without understanding why I am placed in this seat rather than in any other ; or why this moment of time given me to live was assigned rather at such a point than at any other of the whole eternity which was before me, or of all that which is to come after me. I see nothing but infinities on all

sides, which devour and swallow me up like an atom, or like a shadow which endures but a single instant and is never to return. The sum of my knowledge is, that I must shortly die; but that which I am most ignorant of is this very death, which I feel myself unable to decline.

As I know not whence I came, so I know not whither I go; only this I know, that at my departure out of the world I must either fall for ever into nothing or into the hands of an incensed God, without being capable of deciding which of these two conditions shall eternally be my portion. Such is my state, full of weakness, obscurity, and wretchedness. And from all this I conclude that I ought, therefore, to pass all the days of my life without considering what is hereafter to befall me; and that I have nothing to do but to follow my inclinations without reflection or disquiet in doing all that which, if what men say of a miserable eternity prove true, will infallibly plunge me into it. It is possible I might find some light to clear up my doubts; but I shall not take a minute's pains nor stir one foot in the search of it. On the contrary, I am resolved to treat those with scorn and derision who labour in this inquiry and care, and so to run without fear or foresight upon the trial of the grand event; permitting myself to be led softly on to death, utterly uncertain as to the eternal issue of my future condition.

In earnest, it is a glory to religion to have so unreasonable men for its professed enemies; and their opposition is of so little danger, that it serves to illustrate the principal

truths which our religion teaches. For the main scope of Christian faith is to establish these two principles, the corruption of nature and the redemption by Jesus Christ. And these opposers, if they are of no use towards demonstrating the truth of the redemption by the sanctity of their lives, yet are at least admirably useful in showing the corruption of nature by so unnatural sentiments and suggestions.

Nothing is so important to any man as his own estate and condition; nothing so great, so amazing, as eternity. If therefore, we find persons indifferent to the loss of their being and to the danger of endless misery, it is impossible that this temper should be natural. They are quite other men in all other regards, they fear the smallest inconveniences, they see them as they approach, and feel them if they arrive; and he who passeth days and nights in chagrin and despair for the loss of an employment, or for some imaginary blemish in his honour, is the very same mortal who knows that he must lose all by death, and yet remains without disquiet, resentment, or emotion. This wonderful insensibility with respect to things of the most fatal consequence, in a heart so nicely sensible of the meanest trifles, is an astonishing prodigy and unintelligible enchantment, a supernatural blindness and infatuation.

A man in a close dungeon, who knows not whether sentence of death has passed upon him, who is allowed but one hour's space to inform himself concerning it, and that one hour sufficient, in case it have passed, to obtain reverse, would act contrary to nature and sense should he make use

of this hour not to procure information, but to pursue his vanity or sport. And yet such is the condition of the persons whom we are now describing ; only with this difference, that the evils with which they are every moment threatened do infinitely surpass the bare loss of life and that transient punishment which the prisoner is supposed to apprehend ; yet they run thoughtless upon the precipice, having only cast a veil over their eyes to hinder them from discerning it, and divert themselves with the officiousness of such as charitably warn them of their danger.

Thus not the zeal alone of those who heartily seek God demonstrates the truth of religion, but likewise the blindness of those who utterly forbear to seek Him, and who pass their days under so horrible a neglect. There must needs be a strange turn and revolution in human nature before men can submit to such a condition, much more ere they can applaud and value themselves upon it. For supposing them to have obtained an absolute certainty that there was no fear after death but of falling into nothing, ought not this to be the subject rather of despair than of jollity ? And is it not therefore the highest pitch of senseless extravagance, while we want this certainty, to glory in our doubt and distrust ?

And yet, after all, it is too visible that man has so far declined from his original nature and as it were departed from himself, to nourish in his heart a secret seed-plot of joy, springing up from the libertine reflections. This brutal ease or indolence between the fear of hell and of annihilation carries somewhat so tempting in it, that not only those

who have the misfortune to be sceptically inclined, but even those who cannot unsettle their judgment, do yet esteem it reputable to take up even a counterfeit diffidence. For we may observe the largest part of the herd to be of this latter kind, false pretenders to infidelity and mere hypocrites in atheism. There are persons whom we have heard declare, that the genteel way of the world consists in thus acting the bravo. This is that which they term throwing off the yoke, and which the greater number of them profess, not so much out of opinion as out of gallantry and complaisance.

Yet if they have the least reserve of common sense, it will not be difficult to make them apprehend how miserably they abuse themselves by laying so false a foundation of applause and esteem. For this is not the way to raise a character, even with worldly men, who, as they are able to pass a shrewd judgment on things, so they easily discern that the only method of succeeding in our temporal affairs is to prove ourselves honest, faithful, prudent, and capable of advancing the interest of our friends; because men naturally love nothing but that which some way contributes to their use and benefit. But now what benefit can we any way derive from hearing a man confess that he has eased himself of the burden of religion; that he believes no God as the witness and inspector of his conduct; that he considers himself as absolute master of what he does, and accountable for it only to his own mind? Will he fancy that we shall be hence induced to repose a greater degree of confidence in him hereafter? or to depend on his comfort,

his advice, or assistance in the necessities of life? Can he imagine us to take any great delight or complacency when he tells us that he doubts whether our very soul be anything more than a little wind and smoke? nay, when he tells it us with an air of assurance and a voice that testifies the contentment of his heart? Is this a thing to be spoken of with pleasantry? or ought it not rather to be lamented with the deepest sadness, as the most melancholic reflection that can strike our thoughts?

If they would compose themselves to serious consideration, they must perceive the method in which they are engaged to be so very ill chosen, so repugnant to gentility, and so remote even from that good air and grace which they pursue, that, on the contrary, nothing can more effectually expose them to the contempt and aversion of mankind, or mark them out for persons defective in parts and judgment. And, indeed, should we demand from them an account of their sentiments and of the reasons which they have to entertain this suspicion in religious matters, what they offered would appear so miserably weak and trifling as rather to confirm us in our belief. This is no more than what one of their own fraternity told them with great smartness on such an occasion. "If you continue," says he, "to dispute at this rate, you'll infallibly make me a Christian." And the gentleman was in the right; for who would not tremble to find himself embarked in the same cause with so forlorn, so despicable companions?

And thus it is evident that they who wear no more than

the outward mask of these principles are the most unhappy counterfeits in the world ; inasmuch as they are obliged to put a continual force and constraint on their genius, only that they may render themselves the most impertinent of all men living.

If they are heartily and sincerely troubled at their want of light, let them not dissemble the disease. Such a confession could not be reputed shameful, for there is really no shame but in being shameless. Nothing betrays so much weakness of soul as not to apprehend the misery of man while living without God in the world ; nothing is a surer token of extreme baseness of spirit than not to hope for the reality of eternal promises ; no man is so stigmatised a coward as he that acts the bravo against Heaven. Let them therefore leave these impieties to those who are born with so unhappy a judgment as to be capable of entertaining them in earnest. If they cannot be Christian men, let them, however, be men of honour ; and let them, in conclusion, acknowledge that there are but two sorts of persons who deserve to be styled reasonable, either those who serve God with all their heart because they know Him, or those who seek Him with all their heart because as yet they know Him not.

If then there are persons who sincerely inquire after God, and who, being truly sensible of their misery, affectionately desire to be rescued from it, it is to these alone that we can in justice afford our labour and service for their direction in finding out that light of which they feel the want.

But as for those who live without either knowing God or endeavouring to know Him, they look on themselves as so little deserving their own care that they cannot but be unworthy the care of others; and it requires all the charity of the religion which they despise not to despise them to such a degree as even to abandon them to their own folly. But since the same religion obliges us to consider them while they remain in this life, as still capable of God's enlightening grace, and to acknowledge it as very possible that in the course of a few days they may be replenished with a fuller measure of faith than we now enjoy, and we ourselves on the other side fall into the depths of their present blindness and misery, we ought to do for them what we desire should be done to us in their case; to entreat them that they would take pity on themselves, and would at least advance a step or two forward, if perchance they may come into the light. For which end it is wished that they would employ in the perusal of this piece some few of those hours which they spend so unprofitably in other pursuits. It is possible they may gain somewhat by the reading; at least, they cannot be great losers. But if any shall apply themselves to it with perfect sincerity and with an unfeigned desire of knowing the truth, I despair not of their satisfaction, or of their being convinced by so many proofs of our divine religion as they will find laid together.

II.

MARKS OF THE TRUE RELIGION.

THE true religion ought chiefly to distinguish itself by obliging men to the love of God. This is what natural justice requires, and yet what no institution besides the Christian has ever commanded.

It ought likewise to have some apprehension of the innate concupiscence of man and of his utter insufficiency for the attainment of virtue by his own strength, and some skill in applying the proper remedies to this defect, of which prayer is the principal. Our religion has performed all this, and none besides has ever begged of God the power of loving and of obeying Him.

* To make out the truth and certainty of a religion, it is necessary that it should have obtained the knowledge of human nature. For our true nature and true happiness, true virtue and true religion are things, the knowledge of which is reciprocal and inseparable. It should also be able to discern the greatness and the meanness of human condition, together with the cause and reason of both. What

religion, the Christian only excepted, could ever pretend to be thus knowing?

* Other religions, as those of the heathens, are more popular, as consisting only in external appearance; but then they are unqualified for moving the judicious and prudent. Again, should any religion reside altogether in the inward spirit, it might be fitter to work on parts and genius, but could hold no influence over the gross of mankind. Christianity alone is proportioned to all capacities, being duly composed and tempered of the internal and the external way. It raises the most ignorant to inward and spiritual acts, and, at the same time, abases the most intelligent by pressing the obligation to outward performances, and is never complete but when it joins one of these effects to the other; for there is the like necessity that the people should understand the spirit which is veiled under the letter, and that the learned should submit their spirit to the letter, in complying with exterior practices and rites.

* That there is somewhat in us which ought to be hated, bare reason will convince us; and yet there is no religion but the Christian which enjoins us to hate ourselves; wherefore no other religion ought to be entertained by those who know and confess themselves to be worthy of nothing but hated.

* No religion, except the Christian, has known man to be the most excellent of visible creatures, and, at the same time, the most miserable. Some having apprehended the

reality of his excellence, have censured as mean and ungrateful the low opinion which men naturally entertain of their own condition. Others, well knowing the unhappy effects of his baseness and misery, have exposed as ridiculously vain those notions of grandeur which are no less natural to men.

* It is our religion which has first taught that man is born in sin. No sect of philosophers ever said this, therefore no sect ever said the truth.

* The divine nature being removed from human thoughts and discovery, every religion which does not confess it to be so is false ; and every religion which does not show the reason why it is so must be barren and unedifying. Our religion has performed both parts.

* That religion which consists in believing the fall of man from a state of glory and communication with God to a state of sorrow, humiliation, and estrangement from God, together with his restoration by a Messias, has always been in the world. All things are passed away, and this remains for which all things were : for God, in His wisdom, designing to form to Himself a holy people, whom He should separate from all other nations, should deliver from their enemies, and should settle in a place of rest, was pleased expressly to promise, not only that He would accomplish this mercy, but that He would come Himself into the world for its performance, foretelling by His prophets the very time and manner of His coming ; yet in the mean while, to confirm the hope of His elect through all ages, He continually afforded

them the pledges of types and figures, and never left them without assurances, as well of His power as of His inclination to save them. For immediately after the first creation, Adam was the witness and depositary of the promise concerning a Saviour to be born of the seed of the woman ; and though men, while they stood so near to their own originals, could not forget the gift of their being, the shame of their fall, or the divine promise of a Redeemer, yet since the world in its very infancy was overrun with all sorts of corruptions and disorders, God was pleased to raise up holy men, as Enoch, Lamech, and others, who, with a peculiar faith and patience, waited for the Author of their deliverance. After this, when the wickedness of men was arrived at its pitch, we read of God's sending Noah on a special commission, and of His rescuing him from the common destruction ; a miracle which testified at once the power of God to save the world, and His will to perform this by raising up to the woman the seed which He had promised. This signal act of omnipotence was enough to strengthen the expectation of mankind, and the memory of it was still fresh when God renewed His promises to Abraham (who dwelt in the midst of idolaters) and opened to him the mystery of the Messias that was to come. In the days of Isaac and Jacob, the abomination was spread over the whole earth ; yet these holy patriarchs lived in faith, and the latter of them, as he blessed his children before his approaching death, refrained not from crying out with a pious transport, which interrupted his discourse, " I will

wait for Thy salvation, O Lord" : *Salutare tuum expectabo, Domine.*

The Egyptians were besotted with idolatry and magic, nor did the people of God escape the infection of their example ; yet Moses with other excellent persons saw Him whom they saw not, and adored Him, and had respect unto the eternal recompence which He was preparing for them.

The Greeks and Romans introduced a new multitude of fictitious deities ; the poets advanced their repugnant systems of theology ; the philosophers broke out into a thousand different sects and clans ; yet were there always in the little corner of Judea chosen men who foretold the coming of the Messias, unknown to all but themselves.

He came at length in the fulness of time ; and ever since His appearance, notwithstanding the numerous births of schisms and heresies, the revolutions in government, and the utter change in all things, the same Church, whose glory it is to adore Him who has been ever adored, still subsists without interruption or decay. And what must be owned to be incomparably excellent, wonderful, and altogether divine, this religion which has ever subsisted has ever been opposed. A thousand times has it been on the very brink of universal ruin ; and as often as it has been reduced to this estate, so often has it been relieved by some extraordinary interposal of Almighty power. It is astonishing that it should never want a miracle to deliver it in extremity, and that it should be able to maintain itself without bending to the will of tyrants and oppressors.

* Civil states must infallibly perish if they did not many times permit their laws to give way to necessity ; but religion, as it has never suffered this violence, though it has never stooped to this compliance, yet here must be such accommodations and submissions, or there must be a miraculous support. It is no wonder that empires and governments should procure their safety by thus bending and bowing ; and it is indeed improper in this case to say that they maintain or uphold themselves ; yet we see that they at length find an utter dissolution ; nor has any one amongst them been so long-lived as to reach the period of fifteen hundred years. But that religion should have always kept its ground by always continuing unalterable and unflexible, this is truly great and providential.

* Thus has the belief in the Messias been derived down by a constant series and uninterrupted course. The tradition from Adam was fresh and lively in Noah, and even in Moses. After these the prophets bore testimony to him, at the same time predicting other things which, being from day to day fulfilled in the eyes of all the world, demonstrated the truth of their mission, and consequently of their promises in this behalf. They unanimously declared that the legal ordinances were but preparatory to the Messias's institution ; that till such a time the former should indeed subsist without intermission, but that the latter should endure for ever ; and that by this means either the law of Moses or that of the Messias,

which is prefigured, should always continue upon earth ; and, in fact, there has been such a continuance to our days. Jesus Christ came agreeably to all the circumstances of their predictions : He performed miracles in His own person, and by the hands of His apostles, whom He appointed for the conversion of the Gentile world : and the prophecies being thus once accomplished, the Messias is for ever demonstrated.

* That religion which alone is contrary to our nature, in our present estate, which declares war against all our pleasures and inclinations, and which, upon a slight and transient view, seems repugnant even to common sense, is that alone which has subsisted from the beginning.

* It is necessary that the whole current of things should bear a regard to the establishment and the grandeur of religion ; that there should be implanted in men sentiments agreeable to its precepts ; and in a word, that it should so visibly be the great object and centre towards which all things tend, that whosoever understands its principles may be thence enabled to give an account, as of human nature in particular, so, in general, of the whole state and order of the world.

It is upon this very foundation that wicked and profane men are wont to build their blasphemous calumnies against the Christian religion, only because they misunderstand it. They imagine that it consists purely in the adoration of the Divinity, considered as great, powerful, and eternal. This is properly Deism, and stands almost as far removed from

Christianity as Atheism, which is directly opposite to it. Yet hence they would infer the falsehood of our religion ; because (say they) were it true, God would have manifested Himself under its dispensation by so visible tokens, that it should have been impossible for any man not to know Him.

But let them conclude what they will against Deism, they will be able to draw no such conclusion to the prejudice of Christianity ; which acknowledges, that since the fall, God does not manifest Himself to us with all the evidence that is possible, and which consists properly in the mystery of a Redeemer, who by sustaining at once the divine and human natures, has recovered men out of the corruption of sin, that He might reconcile them to God in His divine person.

True religion, therefore, instructs men in these two principles : that there is a God whom they are capable of knowing and enjoying ; and that there are such corruptions in their nature as render them unworthy of Him. There is the same importance in apprehending the one and the other of these points ; and it is alike dangerous for man to know God without the knowledge of his own misery, and to know his own misery without the knowledge of a Redeemer, who may deliver him from it. To apprehend one without the other begets either the pride of philosophers, who knew God, but not their own misery ; or the despair of atheists, who know their own misery, but not the Author of their deliverance.

And as it is of equal necessity to man that he should obtain the knowledge of both these principles, so is it equally agreeable to the mercy of God that He should afford the means of such a knowledge. To perform this is the office and the very essence of Christianity.

Upon this foot let men examine the order and economy of the world, and let them see whether all things do not conspire in establishing these two fundamentals of our religion.

* If any one knows not himself to be full of pride and ambition, of concupiscence and injustice, of weakness and wretchedness, he is blind beyond dispute. And if any one who knows himself to labour under these defects, at the same time desires not to be rescued from them, what can we say of a man who has thus abandoned his reason? What remains then, but that we preserve the highest veneration for a religion which so well understands the infirmities of mankind, and that we profess the heartiest wishes for the truth of a religion which engageth to heal those infirmities by so happy, so desirable a relief?

III.

THE TRUE RELIGION PROVED BY THE CONTRARIETIES WHICH ARE DISCOVERABLE IN MAN, AND BY THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN.

THE greatness and the misery of man being alike conspicuous, it is necessary the true religion should declare that he contains in himself some noble principle of greatness, and, at the same time, some profound source of misery. For the true religion cannot answer its character otherwise than by searching our nature to the bottom, so as perfectly to understand all that is great and all that is miserable in it together with the reason of one and of the other. Religion is farther obliged to account for those astonishing contrarieties which we find within us. If there be but one principle or efficient cause, one author of all things, and himself the end of all things ; the true religion must teach us to make him alone the object of our worship and our love. But since we find ourselves under an inability as well of adoring him whom we know not as of loving any thing but ourselves, the same religion which enjoins us these

duties ought also to acquaint us with this inability, and to instruct us in its cure.

Again, in order to the accomplishment of man's happiness, it ought to convince us that there is a God, that we are obliged to love Him, that our true felicity consists in our dependence on Him, and our only evil and misfortune in our separation from Him. It ought to inform us that we are full of gross darkness, which hinders us from knowing and loving Him ; and that our duty thus obliging us to love God, and our concupiscence turning our whole affection upon ourselves, we are notoriously unjust. It ought to discover to us the cause of that enmity and opposition which we bear to God and to our own happiness. It ought to teach us the remedies of this infirmity, and the means of obtaining them. Let men compare all the religions of the world in these respects, and let them observe whether any one but the Christian is able to afford them satisfaction.

Shall it be the religion of those philosophers, who proposed no other good but what they would have us find in our own persons ? In this the true and sovereign good ? or have these men discovered the remedy of our evils ? Was it a proper method for the cure of man's presumption thus to equal him with God ? On the other hand, have those succeeded better in restraining our earthly desires who would bring us down to the level of beasts and present us with sensual gratifications for our real and universal happiness ? " Lift up your eyes to God," said those of the former tribe ; " behold Him who has stamped you with His

image and has made you for His worship. You have not only a capacity of being like Him, but wisdom, if you follow its directions, will even render you His peers." While those of the latter herd cried, with no less earnestness, "Cast down your eyes to the ground, base worms as you are, and look on the beasts, your goodly partners and fellows." What, then, is to be the fate of man? Shall he be equal to God or shall he not be superior to the beasts? How frightful, how shocking a distance this! What shall we be then? What religion shall instruct us to correct at once our pride and our concupiscence? What religion shall disclose to us our happiness and our duty, together with the infirmities which stop us in so desired a course; the proper help of these infirmities and the means of obtaining this help? Let us hear what answer we receive upon the whole inquiry from the wisdom of God speaking to us in the Christian religion.

It is in vain, O men, that you seek from yourselves the remedy of your miseries. All your lights extend to no farther discovery than this: that you cannot from your own stores be supplied with happiness or truth. The philosophers, who promised all things, could perform nothing in your behalf; they neither apprehended your true estate nor your real good. What possibility was there of your receiving benefit from their prescriptions, who had not skill enough to understand your disease? Your chief infirmities are pride, which alienates you from God, and concupiscence, which fastens you down to earth; and their

constant employment was to caress and entertain one or the other of these disorders. They who presented God to you as the sole object of your contemplation did but gratify your pride by vainly insinuating that your nature was constituted under a parity with the divine. And as for those who saw the extravagance of such pretensions, what did they but set you upon the other precipice, by tempting you to believe that your nature was of a piece with that of the beasts, and by inclining you to place all your good in sensual delight, the portion of irrational creatures? These could never be the means of discovering to you the injustice of your proceedings. Do not, therefore, expect instruction or consolation from men. It was I that first made you to be, and it is I alone which can teach you the knowledge of your own being. You are not now in the estate under which you were formed by my hand. I created man holy, innocent, and perfect; I replenished him with light and understanding; I communicated to him my wonders and my glory. Then it was that the eye of man beheld the majesty of God. He did not then labour under this darkness which blinds him, under this mortality and these miseries which afflict and oppress him. But he was unable to sustain so great degrees of splendour without falling into presumption. He was disposed to make himself the centre of his own happiness, and altogether independent from the divine succours. And when he had withdrawn himself from my dominion, and

affected an equality with me by presuming to find all his happiness in himself, I abandoned him to his own guidance ; and causing a general revolt amongst the creatures that were his subjects, I made them his enemies. Man himself is now become like unto the beasts, and removed to such a distance from me as scarce to retain some scattered rays and confused notices of his Author ; so far have all his discerning powers been either extinguished or disturbed. His senses being never the servants, and very often the masters of his reason, have driven him on the pursuit of unwarrantable pleasures. All the creatures with which he is surrounded either grieve and torment, or tempt and seduce him, thus ever maintaining a sovereignty over him, either as they subdue him by their strength, or as they melt him with their charms, which is the more imperious and more fatal tyranny.

* Behold the present estate and condition of men. On the one hand they are carried towards the happiness of their primitive nature by a powerful instinct still remaining within them ; and, on the other hand, they are plunged in the miseries of their own blindness and concupiscence, which is now become their second nature.

* From the principles which I have here laid open to you, you may discern the spring of those wonderful contradictions which, while they astonish all men, do no less distract and divide them.

* Observe again all the movements of greatness and

glory, which the sense of so many miseries is not able to extinguish, and consider whether they can proceed from a less powerful cause than original nature.

* Know then, proud mortal, what a paradox thou art to thyself. Let thy weak reason be humbled, let thy frail nature compose itself in silence ; learn that man infinitely surpasseth man, and let thy own history, to which thou art thyself an utter stranger, be declared to thee by thy Maker and thy Lord.

* For, in a word, had man never fallen into corruption, he would proceed in the enjoyment of truth and happiness with an assured delight ; and had man never known any other than this corrupted state, he would, at present, retain no idea of truth and happiness. But so great is our misery—greater than if we had never tasted anything lofty or noble in our condition—that we preserve an idea of happiness, while we are unable to pursue it ; that we discern some faint image of truth, while we possess nothing but lies, being alike incapable of absolute ignorance and of accomplished knowledge. So manifest is it that we once stood in a degree of perfection, from which we are now unhappily fallen.

* What, then, does this eagerness in coveting and this impotence in acquiring teach us, but that man was originally possessed of a real bliss, of which nothing now remains but the footsteps and empty traces, which he vainly endeavours to replenish with all the abundance that surrounds him, seeking from absent enjoyments the

relief which he finds not in such as are present, and which neither the present nor the absent can bestow on him; because this great gulf, this infinite vacuity, is only to be filled up by an object infinite and immovable.

* It is most astonishing to reflect that of all mysteries, that which seems to be farthest removed from our discovery and apprehension—I mean the transmission of original sin—should yet be so necessary a point of knowledge, as that without it we must remain utter strangers to ourselves. For it is beyond doubt that nothing appears so shocking to our reason as that the transgression of the first man should derive a guilt on those who, being so vastly distant from the fountain, seem incapable of sharing in the impure tincture. This transfusion is looked upon by us not only as impossible, but as unjust, could we suppose it to be possible. For what can be more repugnant to the rules of our miserable justice than to doom to eternal ruin an infant without will or choice for an offence which shows so little probability of affecting him, as to have been committed six thousand years before his existence in the world? Certainly, nothing strikes our judgment with more harshness and violence than such a doctrine. And yet without this incomprehensible mystery we are ourselves incomprehensible to our own mind. The clue which knits together our whole fortune and condition takes its turns and plies in this amazing abyss; insomuch that man will appear no less unconceivable without this mystery, than this mystery appears unconceivable to man.

* Original sin is foolishness to men. It is granted to be so: wherefore, reason ought not to be accused as defective in this knowledge, because it pretends not to be such as reason can ever fathom. But then this foolishness is wiser than all the wisdom of men, *quod stultum est Dei sapientius est hominibus*: for without this how would it be possible to say what man is? His whole estate depends on this one imperceptible point. Yet how should he be made acquainted with this by his reason, when it is a thing above his reason, and when reason, instead of introducing him to it, carries him the farther from it, the more it is employed in the search?

* These two opposite states, of innocence and of corruption, being presented to our view, we cannot but perceive the difference, and applaud the discovery.

* Let us follow our own motions, and observe ourselves; and let us see whether we may not trace out the lively characters of these different natures.

* How surprising is it that so numerous contradictions should be found in one and the same subject!

* This double temper and disposition of man is so visible, that there have not been wanting those who imagined him to have two souls; one single subject appearing to them incapable of so great and sudden variety, from an unmeasurable presumption to a dreadful abasement and abjectness of spirit.

* Thus the several contrarieties which, in appearance, should most alienate men from the knowledge of all religion,

are those very things which should, indeed, most effectually conduct them to the true.

For my own part, I cannot but declare that so soon as the Christian religion discovers to me this one principle, that human nature is depraved, and fallen from God, this clears up my sight, and enables me to distinguish throughout the characters of so divine a mystery. For such is the whole frame and disposition of nature, as, in all things within and without us, to bespeak the loss of God's more immediate presence, and more favourable communications.

Without this divine information, what would be left for men to do, but either immoderately to exalt themselves, by the remaining sense of their former grandeur, or no less immoderately to abase themselves, by reflecting on their present infirmity? For not being in a capacity of absolute truth, it is impossible they should arrive at perfect virtue: some looking on nature as indefectible, others as irrecoverable, they must of necessity fall either into vanity or idleness, the two great sources of all vice. For they could not but either abandon themselves through negligence, or cure their negligence by flattering their pride. If they knew the excellency of man, they would be ignorant of his corruption, so as easily to escape the danger of remissness and sloth; but, at the same time, to lose themselves in haughty conceit. Or, if they were sensible of the infirmity of nature, they should be strangers to its dignity, so as easily to refrain from being transported with presumption; but, at the same time, to plunge themselves into despair.

Hence arose the various sects of the Stoics and Epicureans, of the Dogmatists and the Academics, etc. It is the Christian religion alone which has been able thoroughly to cure these opposite distempers; not so as to drive the one out by the other, according to the wisdom of the world, but so as to expel them both by the simplicity of the Gospel. For while it exalts the good and pious even to a participation of the divinity itself, it lets them understand that, in this their sublime estate, they still retain the fountain of all corruption, which renders them, during their whole life, subject to error and misery, to death and sin. And at the same time it assures the most impious that they are not yet incapable of sharing the grace and blessing of a Redeemer. Thus speaking, not without terror to those whom it justifies, nor without comfort to those whom it condemns, it so wisely tempers hope and fear, in regard to this double capacity of sin and of grace, which is common to all mankind, that it abaseth infinitely more than unassisted reason, yet without despair, and exalts infinitely more than natural pride, yet without puffing up; hereby demonstrating that being alone exempt from error and vice, it can alone challenge the office of instructing and of reforming men.

* The Christian faith is most surprising in its measures. It enjoins man to acknowledge himself vile, and even abominable, and obliges him, at the same time, to aspire towards a resemblance of his Maker. Were not things thus exactly balanced, either such an exaltation would render

him extravagantly vain, or such a debasement would render him horribly abject and dispirited.

* The mystery of the Incarnation discovers to man the greatness of his danger, by the greatness of those methods which he stood in need of for his relief.

* We find not in the Christian religion either such a state of humiliation as renders us incapable of good, nor such a state of holiness as is perfectly exempt from evil.

* No doctrine is so justly suited to the condition and to the temper of man as this, which makes him acquainted with his double capacity of receiving and forfeiting grace, as a fence against the double danger to which he is always exposed, of despair and of pride.

* The philosophers never furnished men with sentiments agreeable to these two estates. They either inspired a principle of pure grandeur, and this cannot be the true condition of man, or else of mere abjectness, and this condition is as ill-proportioned as the former. We ought to preserve a sense of humiliation; yet not as the character of our nature, but as the effect of our repentance; not such as should fix us in desperation, but such as should dispose and lead us on to greatness. Nor ought we to be less affected with the motions of grandeur, yet of such as proceeds from grace, not from merit, and such as we arrive at by the discipline of humiliation.

* No man is so happy as the true Christian, none is so rational, so virtuous, so amiable. With how little vanity does such an one reflect on himself as united to God?

With how little abjectness does he rank himself with the worms of the earth?

* Who then can withhold his belief or adoration from so divine a guidance and light? For is it not clearer than the day that we see and feel within ourselves indelible characters of excellence? And is it not full as clear that we experience every moment the effects of deplorable baseness? What else, therefore, does this chaos, this monstrous confusion in our nature, but proclaim the truth of these two estates, and that with a voice so powerful, as is always to be heard and never to be resisted?

IV.

IT IS BY NO MEANS INCREDIBLE THAT GOD SHOULD UNITE
HIMSELF TO US.

THAT which renders men so averse to believing themselves capable of an union with God is nothing else but the thought of their own baseness and misery: yet if this thought of theirs be sincere, let them pursue it as far as I have done, and let them confess our baseness to have only this effect, with respect to God, that it hinders us from discovering by our own strength whether His mercy cannot render us capable of an union with Him. For I would gladly be informed whence this creature, which acknowledgeth himself so weak and contemptible, should obtain a right of setting bounds to the divine mercy, and of measuring it by such a rule and standard as his own fancy suggests. Man knows so little of the divine essence as to remain ignorant of what he is himself; and yet, disturbed at this imperfect view of his own condition, he boldly pronounceth that it is beyond the power of God to qualify him for so sublime a conjunction. But I will ask him whether God requires anything else at his hands but that he should

know Him, and should love Him ; and since he finds himself in his own nature capable of knowing and of loving, upon what ground he suspects that the divine nature cannot exhibit itself as the object of his knowledge and his love ? For as he certainly knows, at least, that he is somewhat, so he no less certainly loves somewhat. If then he sees anything under the present darkness of his understanding, and if amongst the things of this world he can find somewhat which may engage his affection, should God be pleased to impart to him some ray of His essence, why should he not be able to know and to love his divine Benefactor, according to the measure and proportion in which this honour was vouchsafed ? There must therefore, no doubt, be an intolerable presumption in these ways of reasoning, though veiled under an appearance of humility. For our humility can neither be rational nor sincere - unless it makes us confess, that not knowing of ourselves even what we ourselves are, we cannot otherwise be instructed in our own condition, than by the assistance and information of Heaven.

V.

THE SUBMISSION AND USE OF REASON.

THE last process of reason is to discover that there is an infinity of things which utterly surpass its force. And it must be very weak if it arrive not at this discovery.

* It is fit we should know how to doubt where we ought, to rest assured where we ought, to submit where we ought. He who fails in any one of these respects is unacquainted with the power of reason. Yet are there many which offend against these three rules ; either by warranting everything for demonstration, because they are unskilled in the nature of demonstrative evidence ; or by doubting of everything, because they know not where they ought to submit ; or by submitting to everything, because they know not where to use their judgment.

* If we bring down all things to reason our religion will have nothing in it mysterious or supernatural. If we stifle the principles of reason our religion will be absurd and ridiculous.

* Reason, says St. Austin, would never be for submitting if it did not judge that on some occasions sub-

mission was its duty. It is but just, therefore, that it should recede where it sees an obligation of receding ; and that it should assert its privileges where, upon good grounds, it supposeth itself not engaged to waive them.

* Superstition and true piety are things which stand at the greatest distance from each other. To carry piety to the extravagant heights of superstition is indeed to destroy it. Heretical men are wont to reproach us with this superstitious submission of our faculties. And we should be guilty of the charge, if we required men to submit in things which are not the proper matter of submission.

Nothing is so agreeable to reason as the disclaiming of reason in matters of pure faith. And nothing is so repugnant to reason as the disuse of reason in things that do not concern faith. The extremes are equally dangerous, either wholly to exclude reason or to admit nothing but reason.

* Faith says many things in which the senses are silent, but nothing which the senses deny. It is always above them, but never contrary to them.

VI.

FAITH WITHOUT REASONING.

MIGHT we but see a miracle, say some men, how gladly would we become converts? They could not speak in this manner did they understand what conversion means. They imagine that nothing else is requisite to this work but the bare acknowledgment of God, and that His adoration and service consists only in the paying Him certain verbal addresses, little different from those which the heathens used towards their idols. True conversion is to abase, and, as it were, to annihilate ourselves before this great and sovereign Being, whom we have so often provoked, and who every moment may, without the least injustice, destroy us. It is to acknowledge that we can do nothing without His aid, and that we have merited nothing from Him but His wrath. It is to know that there is an invincible opposition between God and ourselves, and that without the benefit of a Mediator there could be no transaction or intercourse between us.

Never think it strange that illiterate persons should believe without reasoning. God inspires them with the love

of His justice and with the hatred of themselves. It is He that inclines their hearts to believe. No man ever believes with a true and saving faith unless God inclines his heart ; and no man, when God inclines his heart, can refrain from thus believing. Of this David was sensible when he prayed : “Inclina cor meum, Deus, in testimonia tua.”

* That some men believe without having examined the proofs of religion is because they enjoy a temper and frame of mind altogether pious and holy ; and because what they hear affirmed by our religion is agreeable to such a temper.

They are sensible that one God is their Maker ; they are inclined to love nothing but Him, and to hate nothing but themselves. They are sensible of their own weakness and impotence, that they are of themselves utterly incapable of coming to God, and that, unless He is pleased mercifully to come to them, it is impossible they should maintain any communication with Him. And they hear our religion declaring that God alone ought to be the object of our affection, and ourselves alone of our detestation ; and that, whereas we are by nature corrupt, and under an incapacity of uniting ourselves to God, God has been pleased to become man that He might unite Himself to us. There needs no more to persuade men than this disposition of heart, together with this apprehension of their duty, and of their incapacity for its discharge.

* Those whom we see commencing real Christians, without the knowledge of prophecies, or of the like evidences, do yet judge of their religion no less than the

masters of that knowledge. They judge of it by the heart as others judge by the understanding. God inclines their heart to faith, and His grace is the most effectual conviction.

I confess one of these Christians, who believes without the common methods of proof, is not qualified to convince an infidel, who pretends to want nothing but proof. But those who are skilled in the evidences of religion can with ease demonstrate that such a believer does truly receive his faith from the inspiration of God, though he is unable to prove even this of himself.

VII.

THAT THERE IS MORE ADVANTAGE IN BELIEVING THAN IN DISBELIEVING THE DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The main part of this chapter is addressed purely to certain persons who, not being satisfied with the proofs of religion, and much less with the reasons of atheism, remain in a state of suspense between faith and infidelity. The author pretends only to show these men, by their own principles and by the bare light of reason, that it is plainly their interest to believe, and that this is the side which they ought to take, supposing them to be allowed their option. Whence it follows that, till they have obtained sufficient light to guide them to the truth, they are, in the meantime at least, obliged to do everything which may dispose them for it, and to disengage themselves from all those impediments which may obstruct its reception, such as are especially the passions and the vain amusements of life.

UNITY joined to infinity increases it not, any more than a foot measure added to an infinite space. What is finite vanishes before that which is infinite, and becomes pure nothing. Thus our understanding in respect of God's; thus human justice compared with the divine.

Nay, the disproportion between unity and infinity in general is not so vast as that between man's righteousness and the righteousness of God.

* We know that there is an infinite, but we are ignorant of its nature. For instance, we know it to be false that numbers are finite ; there must, therefore, be an infinity in number ; but what this is we know not. It can neither be equal nor unequal, because unity added to it varies not its condition. Thus we may very well know that there is a God, without comprehending what God is ; and you ought by no means to conclude against the existence of God from your imperfect conceptions of His essence.

For your conviction I shall not call in the testimony of faith, which gives us so certain an assurance, nor even make use of the ordinary proofs, because these you are unwilling to receive. I shall argue with you only upon your own terms, and I doubt not but, from the method in which you reason every day concerning things of the smallest importance, to make it appear after what manner you ought to reason in the present case, and to which side you ought to incline, in deciding this question of the highest consequence, about the existence of God. You allege, then, that we are incapable of knowing whether God is. Yet this remains certain, that either God is or is not, and that there can be no medium in the case. Which part, then, shall we choose? Reason, say you, is not a proper judge in this point. There is an infinite gulf, or chaos, fixed between us ; we play, as it were, at cross and pile for an uncertainty thus infinitely distant. What will you wager? Reason can affirm neither the one nor the other event ; reason can deny neither the one nor the other.

Do not be forward, then, in accusing those of error and falsity who have already chosen their side ; for you confess yourself not to know whether they have indeed acted imprudently and made an ill choice. No, you will say, but I shall take the freedom to censure them still, not for making this choice, but for making any. He that takes cross and he that takes pile are both in the wrong ; the right had been not to wager at all.

Nay, but there is a necessity of wagering ; the thing is placed beyond the indifference of your will ; you are embarked in the cause, and by not laying that God is, you, in effect, lay that He is not. Which will you take ? Let us balance the gain and the loss of sticking to the affirmative. If you gain, you gain all ; if you lose, it is a mere nothing that is lost. Be quick, therefore, and take this side without demur. Well, I confess I ought to lay ; but may not I lay too much ? Supposing the chance to be the same, you would not refuse to stake one life against two. And in case there were ten for you to win, you must be much more imprudent not to hazard one life against ten at a game where the cast was even. But here there is an infinite number of lives infinitely happy to be won upon an equal throw ; and the stake you venture is so petty a thing and of so very short continuance that it would be ridiculous for you to show your good husbandry on this occasion. For you say nothing when you urge that it is uncertain whether you win and that it is certain you must venture,

and that the infinite distance between the certainty of venturing and the uncertainty of winning makes the finite good, which you certainly expose, equal to the infinite, which you uncertainly pursue. This is all deception ; every gamester stakes what is certain against what is uncertain, and yet his venturing a finite certainty for a finite uncertainty never disparages his reason. Again; it is false that there is an infinite distance between the certainty of what we venture and the uncertainty of what we hope to win. Indeed, the certainty of winning and the certainty of losing are infinitely distant. But as for the uncertainty on the winning hand, it is such as fairly balanceth the certainty of what we venture, according to the usual proportion in games of chance. Suppose, therefore, there are as many chances on one side as on the other, the game is even, and thus the certainty of our venture is but equal to the uncertainty of our prize, so far ought we to be from supposing an infinite distance between them. So that on the whole, if we stake a finite where there is a plain equality as to winning or losing, and where that which may be won is infinite, the argument cannot but be of infinite force. We seem here to have a demonstration before us, and if men are not incapable of all truth they cannot remain insensible of this.

I own and confess it ; but still might there not be some means of seeing a little clearer into this matter ? Yes, this is to be done by the help of Scripture and by the other infinite proofs of religion.

Oh, say you, men who may entertain the hope of salvation are very happy in this respect; but is not the fear of hell a very unfortunate counterpoise?

Which, I beseech you, has most cause to be afraid of hell; one that is under ignorance whether there be a hell or not, and under certain damnation if there be; or another who is certainly persuaded that there is a hell, but is encouraged to hope that he shall be delivered from having his part in it?

A man who is respited (suppose for eight days) from the sentence of death, should he not be inclined to think that there is somewhat more in all this than a mere hit of chance, must have utterly abandoned his senses. But now were we not miserably enslaved by our passions, eight days and an hundred years would, upon this view, appear the same thing.

What damage are you like to sustain by embracing the affirmative? Why, you are engaged by this principle to be faithful, honest, humble, grateful, beneficent, hearty, and sincere. It is true you will not bed in possession of base and infamous pleasure, of fading glory, of empty delight. But is not their room to be supplied by more desirable enjoyments? I tell you, you will be a gainer even in this life; and every step you take in the way to which you are now directed you will discover so much certainty of a future advantage, and so much emptiness and mere nullity in what you hazard, as at length to find that you have

trafficked for a sure and infinite reversion, and yet, in effect, have given nothing for the purchase.

But, you say, you are so made as to be incapable of believing ; at least, therefore, endeavour to understand this your incapacity, and to find what it is that debars you of faith when reason so manifestly invites you to it. Labour, then, in your own conviction, not by increasing the proofs of a Deity, but by diminishing the power of your passions. You are willing to be brought to faith, but you know not the way ; you would be cured of your infidelity, and you desire to be informed of the proper remedies. Learn them from those who were once in your condition, but are at present clear from all scruple and doubt. They are acquainted with the path which you would gladly find ; they have recovered from a disease which you wish to overcome. Observe the method with which they began their cure ; imitate their external actions, if you are, as yet, unable to transcribe their inward dispositions ; banish those amusements which have hitherto entirely possessed you.

Oh, I should soon bid adieu to these pleasures, say you, were I once but master of faith. And I say, on the other hand, you would soon be master of faith had you once bidden adieu to these pleasures. It is your part to begin. Were it in my power, I would oblige you with the gift of faith. This I am unable to do, and, consequently, to make out the truth of what you suppose ; but you may

easily abandon your pleasures, and, by consequence, evince the certainty of what I affirm.'

* We must not mistake our own nature, we are body as well as spirit; and hence it comes to pass that the instrument by which persuasion conveys itself to us is not demonstration only. How few things do we see demonstrated? Rational proof and evidence acts immediately on the mind; but custom is the strongest argument. This engages the senses, and they incline the understanding without giving it time for thought. Who has ever yet demonstrated the certainty of to-morrow's light or of our own deaths? And yet what is more universally believed than both? It is custom, therefore, which has confirmed us in this judgment; it is custom which makes so many artisans, soldiers, etc. I confess we ought not to begin with this in the search of truth; yet we ought to have recourse to it when we have once discovered where truth is, to refresh and invigorate our belief, which decays every moment; for that the regular method and train of arguments should be always present to our minds, the business of life will not permit. We ought to acquire a more easy principle, such as is the habit of believing, which, without violence, without art, without argument, recommends things to our assent, and by some secret charm so inclines all our powers towards any persuasion, as that we naturally fall into it. To be ready to believe any doctrine upon the force of conviction is not sufficient when our senses solicit

us to embrace the opposite side. These two parts of ourselves should be so regulated as always to proceed in concert; the understanding by such arguments and evidences as it is sufficient to have once attained in our whole life; the senses by custom and by our not suffering them to take a contrary bias.

VIII.

THE PORTRAIT OF A MAN WHO HAS WEARIED HIMSELF
WITH SEARCHING AFTER GOD BY HIS BARE REASON,
AND WHO BEGINS TO READ THE SCRIPTURE.

WHEN I consider the blindness and misery of man, and those amazing contrarieties which discover themselves in his nature ; when I observe the whole creation to be silent, and man to be without comfort, abandoned to himself, and, as it were, strayed into this corner of the universe, neither apprehending by whose means he came hither, nor what is the end of his coming, nor what will befall him at his departure hence, I am struck with the same horror as a person who has been carried in his sleep into a desolate and frightful island, and who awakes without knowing where he is or by what way he may get out and escape. And upon this view I am at a loss to conceive how so miserable an estate can produce anything but despair. I behold other persons near me of the same nature and constitution ; I ask if they are any better informed than myself, and they assure me they are not. Immediately after which I take notice that these unfortunate wanderers, having looked

about them and espied certain objects of pleasure, are contented to seek no farther, but swallow the bait, embrace the charm, and fasten themselves down to the enjoyment. For my own part, I can obtain no satisfaction or repose in the society of persons like myself, labouring under the same weakness and the same distress. I find they will be able to give me no assistance at my death. I shall be obliged to die alone, and, therefore, I ought to proceed in this respect as if I lived alone. Now, in a condition of solitude I would entertain no projects of building; I would perplex myself with none of the tumultuary affairs of life; I would court the esteem of no person; but would devote myself and my pains to the discovery of truth.

Hence, reflecting how probable it seems that there may be something else besides that which now presents itself to my eye, I begin to examine whether that supreme and Divine Being, which is so much talked of by all the world, has been pleased to leave any marks or footsteps of Himself. I look round on all sides and see nothing throughout but universal obscurity. Nature offers no consideration but what is the subject of doubt and disquiet. Could I nowhere discern the least token of divinity, I would resolve not to believe at all. Could I in everything trace the image of a Creator, I would rest myself upon a sure and settled belief. But while I see too much to deny and too little to affirm the question with any certainty, my condition renders me an object of pity, and I have a thousand times

wished that if nature have indeed a Divine Author and supporter, she would present us with the lively draught and uncontested characters of His being; but if the marks which she bears about her are fallacious, she would entirely conceal Him from our view; that she would either say all or say nothing, so as to determine my judgment on either side. Whereas, under my present suspense, being ignorant as well of what I am, as of that which is expected from me, I remain an equal stranger to my condition and my duty. In the meantime, my heart is absolutely bent on the search of real and solid good, such as when found may complete my hopes and regulate my conduct. I should think no price too dear for this acquisition.

I observe a multitude of religions in all countries and times, but they are such as neither please me with their morals nor move me with their proofs. Thus I would, without distinction, at once reject the religion of Mahomet or of the Chinese, of ancient Egypt or Rome, upon this single reason, because neither of them being able to produce more signs of truth than another, neither of them affording anything to incline and fix our thought, reason cannot show a greater propensity to one mode than to any of the rest.

But while I am making reflections on this strange and unaccountable variety of manners and of belief in different countries and periods, I find in one little corner of the world a peculiar people, separated from all the nations under heaven, whose registers exceed by many ages the

most ancient stories now on record. I discover a great and numerous race, who worship one God and are governed by a law which they affirm themselves to have received from His hand. The sum of what they maintain is this: that they are the only persons whom God has honoured with the communication of His mysteries; that all other men, having corrupted themselves and merited the divine displeasure, are abandoned to their own sense and imagination, whence arise the endless wanderings and continual alterations amongst them, whether in religion or in civil discipline, while their nation alone has preserved an immovable establishment; but that God will not for ever leave the rest of the world under so miserable darkness, that a common Saviour shall at length arrive; that the sole end of their polity is to prefigure and proclaim His arrival; that they were formed and constituted with express design to be the heralds of His great appearance, and to give warning to all nations that they should unite in the blessed expectation of a Redeemer.

My adventure amongst this people, as it gives me the greatest surprise, so, it seems to me, deserving the highest regard and attention on account of the many wonderful and singular curiosities discoverable in their frame.

They are a people composed entirely of brethren; and whereas all others have been constituted by an assemblage of almost infinite races and bloods, these, though so prodigiously fruitful, have descended all from the same man, whence, being as one flesh and as members one of

another, they form the most compacted strength of one undivided family. This is most peculiar and distinguishing.

They are the most ancient people that fall under our knowledge and discovery; a circumstance which, in my judgment, ought to procure them a very particular veneration, especially in regard to our present inquiry, because if God has at any time vouchsafed to reveal Himself to mankind, these are the persons from whose hands we are to receive the tradition.

Nor are they only considerable in point of antiquity, but no less singular in their duration from their original to this day. For while the several people of Greece, of Italy, of Sparta, of Athens, and of Rome, together with others which sprang up long after them, have been extinct many ages, these have always subsisted, and in spite of the various designs of many great and powerful princes, who have a thousand times attempted their destruction—as historians testify, and as it is natural to infer from the ordinary changes and revolutions of things—have maintained themselves during so vast a course of years, and, stretching themselves from the earliest to the latest memory, have caused the annals of their own nation to be so-extended with the history of the world.

The law by which this people is governed appears in all respects to be the most ancient and most perfect that has obtained amongst men, and the only one which was able to endure without change or interruption in a state, as Philo the Jew has demonstrated on many occasions, and

Josephus most admirably in his discourse against Appion, where the same excellent author observes it to have stood so high in respect of antiquity as that the very name of law was not known in other countries till a thousand years after, insomuch that Homer, though obliged to speak of so many different nations, has not once used the word. And as to the perfection of this law we may easily make an estimate of it from the bare reading, by which we shall discern it to have disposed all things with so much wisdom, judgment, and equity, that it is no wonder the famed legislators of Greece and Rome should borrow thence their principal institutions, as we find they did by the laws of the twelve tables, and by other evidence which Josephus has produced at large.

Yet this law is at the same time severe and rigorous beyond all others, obliging its votaries, the better to secure them in their duty, to a thousand peculiar and painful observances, under a capital penalty ; whence we cannot without astonishment reflect that it should for so many ages be preserved inviolable, amongst a rebellious and impatient people such as we know the Jews to have been, while all other states have from time to time changed the body of their laws, though (on the contrary) mild and gentle, and easy to be obeyed.

The same people are still no less to be admired for their great sincerity : they preserve, with the utmost faithfulness and zeal, the very book in which Moses has left it recorded that they were ever stubborn and ungrateful

towards God, and that he foresaw they would be more perverse after his death ; that he therefore calls heaven and earth to witness against them, as to the sufficiency of the warning which he had given them ; that finally, God being incensed by their transgressions, should scatter them through all lands ; and as they had provoked Him to jealousy by serving gods which were no gods, He also should provoke them, by calling a people which were not a people.

To conclude : I find no reason to suspect the authority of the book which relates all these particulars : for there is the vastest difference imaginable between a book composed by a private hand and dispersed amongst a whole people, and a book of which the people themselves seem to be the joint authors, as well as the common subject. In this case the antiquity of the book and of the people is confessedly the same.

It is no inconsiderable recommendation of these writings that they were composed by authors contemporary to the facts which they record. All histories compiled by persons not equal in age to the actions described are suspicious ; as the books of the Sibyls, of Hermes Trismegistus, and many others, which having for a while passed with credit in the world, have been detected as forgeries by succeeding times. Contemporary authors are neither capable of this fraud, nor liable to this censure.

IX.

THE INJUSTICE AND CORRUPTION OF MAN.

MAN is visibly made for thinking: this is all the merit which he boasts, and all the glory to which he aspires. To think as we ought is the sum of human duty; and the true art of thinking is to begin with ourselves, our Author, and our end. And yet what is that which engrosses the thoughts of the whole world? Not one of these objects; but the pursuit of pleasure, the improvement of wealth, the increase of honour and esteem; in fine, the making ourselves kings, without reflecting what it is to be a king, or to be a man.

* Human thought is a thing naturally excellent and noble: it must have prodigious defaults ere it can be exposed to contempt; and yet such it has that nothing is, indeed, more ridiculous. How great does it appear in its genuine nature; how little under its corruption and abuse!

* If we believe a God, the duty of loving Him, and not the creatures, will be necessarily inferred. The reasoning of those profane Epicures described in the Book of Wisdom was grounded on the denial of God's existence. Upon this hypothesis they resolved to take their fill of the creatures:

but had they known the falseness of their principle, they would have concluded quite the contrary. And this is the conclusion of the wise and the good: there is a God; the creatures, therefore, ought not to engage our study or attract our desire. Everything which incites to an union with the creatures is evil, because it either hinders us from serving God if we already know Him, or from seeking Him if as yet we know Him not. But now we find ourselves to be full of these incitements, and to be wholly made up of concupiscence. We are, therefore, full of evil; and if so, we ought to hate and detest ourselves, together with all that which allures or endears us to anything but to God alone.

* If at any time we endeavour to fix our thought and attention upon God, how many things do we feel which divert us from Him, and which tempt us to muse of other subjects? All this cometh of evil; but of such evil as we have the misfortune to bring with us into the world.

* It is utterly false that we deserve the esteem or affection of men, and it is injustice so eagerly to covet it. Were we born masters of reason and with some knowledge of ourselves we should not entertain such a desire; and yet this very desire accompanies our birth. From our very birth, therefore, we ate unjust, while every one of us sets up himself as the great mark of all that he acts or thinks. This is contrary to the order of nature. Our inclinations ought to stand towards the public, and this bias towards ourselves is the first spring of all disorder, in war, in politics, in economics, etc.

* As there ought to be a tendency in all the members of communities, whether natural or civil, towards promoting the good of their respective bodies, so the communities themselves ought to tend to the welfare of another body, such as is still more general and comprehensive.

* Whosoever does not detest in his own heart this self love and this instinct which prompts him to affect a pre-eminence above all persons and things is most wretchedly blind, because nothing has a greater repugnancy to justice and truth ; for as it is false that we deserve such a preference, so is it unjust and, indeed, impossible to arrive at it, because all are ready to put in their claim to the like supremacy. This, then, is a manifest piece of injustice such as attends our birth, such as we are obliged to correct, and yet such as, humanly speaking, is above our correction.

Nevertheless, of all religions except the Christian, none has informed us either that this is a sin, or that we are born under its power, or that we are bound to strive against it ; none has once thought of prescribing a method for its cure.

* There is an intestine war in man between the reason and the passions. He might enjoy some sort of repose were he only swayed by reason without passion, or only by passion without reason ; but since he is acted by both he must live in continual disquiet, not being able to maintain the peace with one without entering into hostility with the other ; and hence he is always divided and always at variance with himself.

* It is to be looked upon as monstrous and unnatural to live carelessly while we are under an utter ignorance of ourselves ; it is, however, far more terrible to live wickedly while we are under a religious persuasion and belief. The greatest part of mankind seem to be possessed with one or the other of these infatuations.

X.

THE JEWS.

ALMIGHTY GOD, intending to show the world that He was able to form a people spiritually good and righteous, and to fill them with eternal glory, was pleased to represent by the goods of nature what He proposed to accomplish in those of grace, that men might learn to acknowledge the invisible effects of His power by their experience of the visible.

Thus He saved His people from the deluge in the person of Noah, He caused them to spring from Abraham, He redeemed them out of the hands of their enemies and established them in rest and peace.

The design of Providence in rescuing them from the common ruin, and in deducing their nation from one stock, was not barely to conduct them to a land of plenty ; but as nature is the image and resemblance of grace, so these visible miracles were symbols and pledges of the invisible to be performed in their season.

* Another cause why it pleased God in so wonderful a manner to institute and train up the Jewish people seems to have been that, having resolved to abridge His faithful

servants of carnal and perishable enjoyments, He might evince by such a series of miracles that He did not deny for want of power to bestow.

* This people have been always immersed in gross and earthly conceits ; as that their father Abraham, even in respect of his flesh, was dear to God, and, consequently, all who descended from him ; that for this reason God had multiplied them on the earth, and by giving them special marks of distinction had prevented their mixing with other nations, had recovered them out of Egypt by many great and wonderful signs performed in their favour, had fed them with manna in the wilderness, had brought them into a fruitful and happy seat, had appointed over them kings of their own race, had raised them a magnificent temple for the offering up of beasts and the purifying themselves by the blood of their sacrifices, and would, in conclusion, send them a victorious Messias who should make them masters of the world.

* The Jews were accustomed to great and splendid miracles ; and hence, looking on the wonders of the Red Sea and of the promised land only as an abridgment of the mighty things of their Messias, they expected from Him still more illustrious and surprising performances, of which all the acts of Moses should seem but an imperfect specimen.

When they were now grown old in carnal errors, Jesus Christ actually came at the time foretold, but not with that outward splendour which had possessed their thought. And

hence they apprehended Him not to be the Messias. After His death St. Paul was sent to instruct men that all these things happened in figure, that the Kingdom of God was in the spirit, not in the flesh ; that their enemies were not Babylonians, but their own lusts and passions ; that God delighted not in temples made with hands, but in a pure and humble mind ; that bodily circumcision was unprofitable, but the circumcision of the heart greatly necessary and important, etc.

God having not thought fit wholly to disclose these truths to so unworthy a people, and yet designing to foretell them that they might hereafter gain the more easy acceptation and belief, signified the time of their accomplishment in express terms, and sometimes clearly imparted the things themselves, but generally represented them under shades and figures, to the intent that those who loved the representation might fix on it without looking farther ; and that those who loved the reality might be able to discern it through the representation. Agreeably to this design we see the nation dividing itself at the Messiah's appearance. The spiritual part received and embraced Him ; and the carnal part who rejected Him remain His witnesses to this day.

* The carnal Jews understood neither the greatness nor the humiliation of the Messias foretold by their prophets. They did not know Him in His greatness and exaltation. As when they were assured that He should be David's Lord, though his Son, that He preceded Abraham and had seen

him, they conceived Him not so great as to have been from all eternity. Nor did they less mistake Him in His humiliation and death. "Christ," say they, "abideth for ever, and this man professeth of himself that he shall die." They neither believed Him therefore to be mortal, nor yet to be eternal; they considered Him with no other regard but to worldly pomp and state.

* They so much doted on the shadows of good things, and so entirely fixed them as the objects of their hope, that they at last mistook the substance, when appearing at the time and in the manner described by the prophets.

* Men indisposed to believing are wont to have recourse for shelter to the unbelief of the Jews. If matters, say they, were indeed so clear and notorious, what should hinder those who were the eye-witnesses of them, from being perfectly convinced? Whereas, their infidelity is really one of the foundations of our faith. Had they been indifferent persons, their obstinacy might have increased our aversion, and have given us a better colour for jealousy and distrust. But here is the miracle, that the same people who were so violent lovers of the predictions should be no less violent haters and opposers of the accomplishments; and that this very hatred and opposition should itself be one of the chief predictions.

* To procure authority and reputation to the Messias, it was necessary that certain prophecies should precede His appearance, and should remain in the custody of unsuspected persons, such as were eminent for diligence and fidelity, and

above all, for zeal, and such as were remarkably known to the rest of mankind.

That things might succeed accordingly, God was pleased to make choice of this carnal people, and to give them in charge of the predictions concerning the Messias, which described Him after the manner of a temporal deliverer, and a dispenser of sensible goods, such as their hearts were particularly affected with. Hence, as they received the prophets with the greatest demonstrations of affection and reverence, so they communicated to all nations those books of prophets which foretold the coming of the Mighty One; assuring them that He would most certainly come, and in the very manner expressed by their records, which they kept open to the view of the whole world. But being finally deceived by the meanness and ignominy of His condition here on earth, they became His greatest opposers. So that we have now a people, who of all mankind can be least suspected of partial favour towards us, thus lending their assistance to support our cause, and by the zeal which they show for their law and their prophets, preserving with the most exact fidelity our evidences and their own condemnation.

* Those who rejected and crucified our Lord, being offended at Him, are the same people with whom those writings still remain which testify concerning Him, and which affirm that He shall be rejected by them and shall be a rock of offence. Thus has their refusal added an eminent mark to the truth of His credentials; and He has been

equally demonstrated for the Messias by the righteous part of the Jewish nation who embraced Him and by the wicked part who despised Him, the one event no less than the other having been long before prophetically declared.

* The reason why the prophecies were conceived with a double sense, a remote and spiritual, to which this people were strongly averse, under an obvious and carnal, to which they were eagerly inclined, seems to have been this. Had the spiritual sense been entirely disclosed to them, it being such as they were unable to love, to embrace, or even to bear, they would have had very little zeal to preserve their writings and institutions. Or if they could have relished these spiritual promises and had, therefore, kept their books uncorrupted till the time of the Messias, then their evidence must have suffered in its force, as being the testimony of friends. We see, therefore, on the one hand the necessity of concealing the spiritual sense; yet, on the other hand, should this concealment have been too deep for all light and discovery, the great evidences of the Messias had been suppressed. What expedient, therefore, was applied? The spiritual sense was, as to the main, disguised under the carnal, yet in some places was expressly delivered without the least covert or shade. Again, the time and state of the world were so exactly and with so many circumstances described and determined, that the sun is not clearer at noonday. And there are some passages in which the spiritual import is so apparently

taught, that no less degree of blindness than that which the mind suffers when entirely oppressed and enslaved by the body, can withhold us from discerning it.

See, then, the admirable disposal of Providence. In an infinite number of places the spiritual sense is covered over with another, yet in some, though rarely occurring, it is openly revealed, and this in such a manner as that the passages in which it is suppressed are capable of both senses ; but those in which it is declared can agree only to the spiritual.

So that this proceeding can by no means be accused as tending to lead men into error, nor could by any, but by a people whose heart was so entirely carnal, have been perverted or misunderstood.

Thus when good things were promised them in great abundance, what could hinder them from interpreting this promise of true and real goods but their covetousness, which determined their apprehension to earthly riches ? Whereas those who placed their only treasure in heaven would have referred the promise to God alone. For there are two principles which divide the wills of men : covetousness and charity. It is not, indeed, impossible that covetousness should subsist with faith, or charity with temporal possessions. But here is the difference : the former employs itself in using God and enjoying the world; the latter in using the world and enjoying God.

Again, the end which we pursue is that which gives names to things; and whatever hinders us in the prosecu-

tion of this is said to be at enmity with us. Thus the creatures which are good in themselves do yet become the enemies of good men when they divert them from God, and God Himself is styled an enemy by those whom He opposes in their lusts.

Hence the appellation of enemy changing its construction according to the different end which men propose, good men by it understood their passions, and carnal men the Babylonians, so that this term was obscure only with respect to the wicked. And it is on this account that Isaiah says : *Signa legem in discipulis meis*—“ Seal the law among my disciples,” and that he tells us : “ Christ shall be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence,” though, as our Lord himself declares, “ Blessed are those who shall not be offended in him.”

The prophet Hosea evidently declares the same difference : “ Who is wise, and he shall understand these things ; prudent, and he shall know them ? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them ; but transgressors shall fall therein.”

Yet this Book of the Old Testament, which was in such a manner framed and compiled as that while it enlightened some it no less blinded others, did, nevertheless, demonstrate in the latter the truth which it discovered to the former. For the visible and temporal goods which they received from God were so great and divine as to testify His power of conferring all invisible and spiritual blessings, together with the end of all, the Messias.

* The time of our Lord's first coming was expressly foretold, but that of His second is not; because at His first coming He was to appear in a private manner, and without any splendid marks of distinction, whereas His second advent shall be surprising, public, illustrious, and visible to His greatest enemies. But though His first appearance was to be thus obscure, discernible only by those who searched the Scriptures, yet were things so providentially disposed that all this contributed to the making Him known. The Jews were His witnesses by receiving Him, because they were the guardians of the prophecies; and they were no less His witnesses by rejecting Him, because in this they very signally accomplished the same prophecies.

* The Jews were in possession of miracles which they had seen performed, and of prophecies which they had seen fulfilled. Again, the doctrine of their law was comprised in the love and adoration of one God, and this doctrine was perpetual; it had, therefore, all the marks of the true religion. And so it really was, for we ought to distinguish between the doctrine of the Jews and the doctrine of the law of the Jews. The doctrine of the Jews could not have been true, though we should suppose it to have had miracles, and prophecies, and perpetuity on its side, because it was deficient in the main principle, the loving and adoring of God alone.

The Jewish religion ought to be considered very differently in the tradition of holy men and in the tradition

of the vulgar. The moral it teaches and the blessedness it proposes are both ridiculous according to the tradition of the vulgar ; but they are incomparably great and excellent in the tradition of holy men. Its foundation is wonderful ; it is the most ancient and most authentic book in the world ; and whereas Mahomet, to procure the establishment of his writings, has forbidden them to be read, Moses, to confirm the authority of his, has commanded all the world to read them.

* The Jewish religion is altogether divine in its authority, in its duration, in its perpetual obligation, in its morality, in its conduct, in its doctrine, in its effects.

This whole model and pattern was formed with resemblance to the truth of the Messias ; and the truth of the Messias was discovered and testified by this its model and pattern.

Under the Jewish economy truth appeared but in figure ; in heaven it is open and without veil. In the Church militant it is so veiled as to be yet discerned by its correspondence to the figure. As the figure was first built upon the truth, so the truth is now distinguishable by the figure.

* He that takes his estimate of the Jewish religion from the grossness of the Jewish multitude cannot fail of making a very wrong judgment. It is to be sought for in the sacred writings and in the traditions of the prophets, who have given us sufficient assurance that they understood the law not according to the letter. Our religion in like manner

is true and divine in the Gospels, in the preaching of the Apostles, and in the traditions of the Church; but it appears utterly disfigured in those who maim or corrupt it.

* The Jews seem to have been of two sorts, according to their different passions and desires, which in some were merely pagan, in others altogether Christian.

* The Messias, according to the carnal Jews, was to come like a mighty temporal prince. According to carnal Christians, He is come to dispense with our loving God, and to give us sacraments which shall operate without our concurrence. This is no more the religion of Christians than that was properly the religion of Jews.

* The true votaries of both religions agree in acknowledging a Messias who shall inspire them with the love of God, and by that love shall make them triumph over their enemies.

* The veil which is upon the Scriptures, in respect of the carnal Jews, holds likewise in respect of wicked Christians, and of all those who will not submit to hate and detest themselves. But how well are we disposed for the understanding of the Scriptures, and for the knowledge of Jesus Christ, when we have once made ourselves the objects of our real aversion and abhorrence?

* The carnal Jews fill the middle place between Christians and pagans. The pagans knew not God, and, therefore, loved nothing but the world; the Jews knew the true God, and still loved nothing but the world; while we Christians, as we have received the knowledge of the true

God, so we have renounced the love of the world. Jews and pagans love the same world, Christians and Jews know the same God.

* The Jews are a people visibly framed to be the standing witnesses of the Messias. They preserve the Scripture with the greatest diligence; they love it with the greatest ardour; but they are wholly at a loss in apprehending it. And all this has been expressly foretold, for it is said that the statutes of God should be delivered to them, but as a book that is sealed.

* So long as there was a succession of prophets to guard the law, the people were entirely negligent as to its custody. But upon the ceasing of the prophets, the zeal of the people supplied their room. And this, amongst others, is a providence too remarkable to be overlooked.

XI.

MOSES.

WHEN the creation of the world began now to stand at a remoter distance, God was pleased to provide a contemporary historian, and to appoint a whole nation for the keepers of his history, as well that this register might be the most authentic in the world, as that all mankind might hence be instructed in a fact which was so necessary for them to know, and yet so impossible otherwise to be known.

* Moses was a person of very great genius and capacity. This is on all hands confessed. Had he, therefore, written with an intention of deceiving, he would have executed it in such a manner as not to be convicted of the deceit. His conduct we find to be quite different, insomuch that, had he delivered what was fabulous, there was not one Jew but could have detected the imposture.

Why, for instance, does he make the lives of the first men so vastly long, and so very few generations of them? In a multitude of generations he might have sheltered

himself from discovery; but in a few this artifice was impracticable. For it is not the number of years, but of generations, which renders things obscure.

Truth never decays or is impaired but by the succession and change of men. And yet we find this historian placing the two greatest events that can enter into human thought—the Creation and the Deluge—so close together as even to make them touch, by means of the few generations which he counts between. Insomuch, that at the time of his registering these things, the memory of them could not but be still fresh and lively in the minds of all the Jewish nation.

* Lamec had a sight of Adam, Sem of Lamec, Abraham of Sem, Jacob of Abraham, and Moses of those who had seen Jacob. Therefore the Creation and the Deluge are indubitably true. This argument must be acknowledged for conclusive by those who apprehend its process.

* The longevity of the patriarchs, instead of contributing to the decay of past memory, was in the highest degree serviceable to its preservation. For if we are sometimes hindered from being sufficiently expert in the story of our ancestors it is because we have seldom lived in their company, or because they left the world before we arrived at the age of reason. But when human life ran out to such an extent, children enjoyed the means of conversing long with their parents. And what could be the subject of this conversation but the lives and actions of their progenitors, since these comprised the body of universal history, and

since men were as yet unacquainted with arts and sciences which now take up so large a share in our discourse? It seems evident, therefore, that the keeping exact genealogies was the peculiar care and almost the whole employment of those earlier times.

XII.

FIGURES.

As there are some figures clear and demonstrative, so there are others which seem less natural and which prove nothing but to those who have discovered the same truths by other lights. The latter figures may seem to resemble those invented by some men who build prophecies on the Revelations, expounded according to their own fancy. But here is the difference: such persons have no infallible predictions to support the doubtful ones which they would introduce. So that they are guilty of the highest injustice while they pretend theirs to be alike well grounded with some of ours; because they have not others which are incontestable to prove them by, as we have. This is by no means, therefore, a parallel case; nor ought we to compare and confound things which agree in one respect, when they are so vastly distant in all others.

* Jesus Christ, prefigured by Joseph, the beloved of his father, and by him sent to visit his brethren, is the innocent person whom his brethren sold for a few pieces of silver, and who, by this means, became their lord and

saviour, nay, the saviour of strangers and of the whole world; which had not happened but for this plot of destroying him, this act of rejecting him and of exposing him to sale.

Consider in both examples the same fortune and the same innocence: Joseph in the prison between two criminals, Jesus on the cross between two thieves; Joseph foretells deliverance to one of his companions and death to the other from the same omens; Jesus Christ saves one companion and deserts the other after the same crimes; Joseph could barely foretell, Jesus Christ, by His own action, performs what He had foretold; Joseph requests the person who should be delivered to be mindful of him in his glory, the person saved by Jesus Christ entreats his deliverer to remember him when He came into His Kingdom.

* The Jewish synagogue never totally ceased and became extinct, because it was the figure of the Christian Church; and yet, because it was only the figure, it was suffered to fall into servitude. The figure subsisted till the arrival of the truth; to the intent that the Church might be always visible, either in the shadow and representation, or in the substance and reality.

XIII.

THAT THE LAW WAS FIGURATIVE.

To evince the authority of both Testaments at once, we are only to observe whether that which is prophesied in the one be performed and accomplished in the other.

* If we would effectually try and examine the prophecies, we ought first of all to be sure that we rightly understand them. For, supposing them to have but one sense, it is certain the Messias cannot yet be come ; but, supposing them to have two senses, the Messias is certainly come in the person of Jesus Christ.

All the question, therefore, is whether they are indeed capable of a double meaning ; whether they are figures or realities, that is, whether we ought not to seek something farther in them than what they immediately present ; or whether we ought to acquiesce in that construction which offers itself to us at the first view ?

If the law and the sacrifices are real it is necessary that they should please God and on no account be displeasing to Him ; if they are figurative it is necessary they should be pleasing and displeasing to God in different regards

but now through the whole series of Scripture they are sometimes affirmed to please God, sometimes to displease Him, and, by consequence, they are only figurative.

* It is said that the law shall be changed, that the sacrifices shall cease, that the people shall continue without a king, without a prince, and without a sacrifice ; that a new covenant shall be established, that a reform shall be made in the law, that the Jews received commandments which were not good, that their sacrifices were abominations, and things which God required not at their hands.

It is said again that the law shall abide for ever, that the covenant shall be eternal, the sacrifices perpetual, and that the sceptre shall never depart from Judah because it is to continue till the everlasting King shall commence His reign. Do such expressions evince all this to be real ? No. Do they demonstrate it to be figurative ? No. They only show that it must be either reality or figure. But the former compared with these latter exclude the reality and establish the figure.

All these passages taken together cannot be applied to the reality, but they may be all applied to the figure, therefore they were spoken in figure, not in reality.

* Would we know whether the law and the sacrifices are real or figurative, we ought to discover whether the prophets, in speaking of these things, had their eyes and thoughts entirely fixed on them so as to look no farther than the old covenant, or whether they did not carry their intention to somewhat else of which all this was but the

shadow and semblance, as in a picture we contemplate the thing represented ; and in order to this discovery we need only hear what they say.

Now when they speak of the covenant as being everlasting, is it possible they should mean the same covenant which they elsewhere testify shall be changed ? The like may be observed of the sacrifices, etc.

* The prophets have expressly said that Israel shall be always beloved of God, and that the law shall be an ordinance for ever ; but they have likewise said that their words were veiled and their meaning not to be fathomed by their hearers.

* We may illustrate this whole case by the familiar instance of writing in cyphers. Suppose we intercept a letter of importance in which we discern one plain and obvious meaning, and are told at the same time that the sense is yet so obscured as that we shall even see the words without seeing it, and understand them without understanding it ; what are we to judge but that the piece has been penned in cyphers ? and so much the rather, the more apparent contrarieties we meet with in the literal construction. How great esteem and veneration ought we therefore to express for those who decipher this writing to us and bring us acquainted with its secrets, especially if the key which they make use of be easy, agreeable, and natural ? This is what was performed by our Lord and His Apostles : they have opened the seal and rent the veil, and rescued the spiritual sense from the literal disguise ; they have

taught us that our enemies are our own carnal affections, and that our Redeemer is to be a spiritual conqueror, that He is to have a first and a second coming, the one in humility to abase the proud, the other in glory to exalt the humble ; in a word, that Jesus Christ is to be God as well as man.

* It was our Lord's chief employment to inform men that they were lovers of themselves, that they were sinners and slaves, blind, distempered, and miserable ; that here-upon it was needful he should deliver and heal them, should enlighten, restore, and bless them ; that all this was to be performed by their hating themselves, and by their taking up each his cross and following Him, their Master, to affliction and death.

* The letter killeth. It was necessary that Christ should suffer, that God should humble Himself, that there should be a circumcision of the heart, a true fast, a true sacrifice, a true temple, a twofold law (as well as a twofold table of the law), a twofold temple, a twofold captivity. This was the difficult cypher presented to us.

We have at length been taught by our Lord to unfold the intricacy of these figures ; we have been informed what it is to be truly free, to be a true Israelite ; we have been shown the true circumcision, the true bread of heaven, etc.

* In the promises of the Old Testament every one finds what he chiefly delights to seek, what is most agreeable to his own heart and affections, spiritual goods or temporal, God or the creatures ; but with this difference,

that they who seek the creatures find them attended with numerous contradictions, with a prohibition to love them, and with a difficult injunction to love and worship God alone; whereas they who seek God find Him without the least repugnancy, and with a pleasing command to admit no other object of worship or of love.

* The main sources of verbal contrarieties in Scriptures are the mysteries of a God humbled to the death of the cross; of a Messias triumphing over death by dying Himself; of the two natures in Jesus Christ; of His twofold coming; of the two estates and conditions of human nature.

* As we cannot justly compose a man's character, but by accounting for all the contrarieties in this humour or conduct; and as it is not enough to pursue a train of agreeable qualities, without giving the resolution of those which appear to be opposite; so ere we can perfectly understand the sense of an author, it is necessary that all the contrary passages should be reconciled.

Wherefore in order to a right apprehension of the Scripture, we ought to find out a sense in which all the seemingly opposite places shall agree. Nor is it sufficient to have an interpretation in which many consonant passages shall be united, but we must have one in which the most dissonant shall meet and conspire.

Every author either has one principal aim and purport, in which all the supposed differences will be found consistent, or he has no meaning at all. The latter cannot be

said of the Scriptures and prophecies. They unquestionably abound in good sense. Some one meaning, then, they will afford us, by which the several repugnancies in style may be adjusted and composed.

Their true sense, therefore, cannot be that which is given them by the Jews. But in Jesus Christ all the various dissonancies are reduced to perfect harmony.

The Jews had not skill enough to make the abrogation of the royalty and principality, foretold by Hosea, accord with the prophecy of Jacob.

If we take the law, the sacrifices, and the kingdom, for things really and ultimately designed, we shall not be able to reconcile all the passages of the same author, nor of the same book, nor, many times, of the same chapter. Which sufficiently discovers the intention of the writers.

* The Jews were not permitted to offer sacrifice, or so much as to eat the tenths, elsewhere than at Jerusalem only, the place which the Lord had chosen.

* Hosea foretold that the Jews should be without a king, without a prince, without sacrifices, and without images. Which prediction we now see fully accomplished; no sacrifice being legally to be offered but at Jerusalem.

* Whenever the word of God, which is eternally true, seems to be false in the literal construction, its truth is preserved in the spiritual. "Sit thou on my right hand;" this is false if spoken literally, yet it is spiritually true. Such expressions as these describe God after the manner of men. And this in particular only implies that the same

honour which men intend in setting others at their right hand, God will also confer, in the exaltation of the Messias. It is, therefore, a note of the divine intention, but affects not the precise manner of the execution.

Thus again, when it is said to the Israelites, God has received the odour of your incense, and will give you in recompence a fertile and plentiful land, the meaning is no more than this, That the same affection which men, delighted with your perfumes, would express by rewarding you with a fruitful land, the same will God express towards you in His blessings ; because you also entertain the like grateful disposition towards God, as a man does towards his superiors, when he thus presents them with sweet odours.

The sole aim and intention of the whole Scripture is charity. All that tends not to this end is merely figure. For since there can be but one point and ultimate scope, whatever is not directed thither in express terms must, at least, be couched under such as are ambiguous.

God, in compassion to our weakness, which variety alone can please, has so varied this one precept of charity as to conduct us every way to our real interest and welfare. For one thing alone being strictly necessary, and yet our hearts being set on divers things, God has provided for the satisfaction of both these inclinations together, by giving us such a diversity as still leads us forward to the one thing necessary.

* The Rabbins take the breasts of His spouse for figure ;

as they do everything which has not a tendency to the sole mark of their expectation, worldly and carnal goods.

* There are, and always have been, men who rightly apprehend that the only enemy of human nature is concupiscence, which turns us away from God ; and that God Himself, not a fruitful land, is our only good and happiness. Those who fancy the good of man to consist in gratifying the flesh, and his evil in the disappointment of sensual desire, let them wallow in their pleasures, let them die in their enjoyments. But as for those who seek God with their whole heart, whom nothing can grieve but the being deprived of the light of His countenance, who have no desire but to enjoy His favour, no enemies but such as divert or withhold them from Him, and whose greatest affliction is to see themselves encompassed and even subdued by such enemies, let them be comforted. For them there is a deliverer, for them there is a God !

A Messias was promised, who should rescue men from their enemies. A Messias is come ; but to rescue men from no other enemies than their sins.

* When David says that the Messias shall deliver the people from their enemies, this, by a carnal expositor, may be applied to the Egyptians. And then I confess I am at a loss to show him how the prophecy has been fulfilled. Yet it may be likewise applied to men's iniquities ; since these, and not the Egyptians, are to be looked on as real enemies.

But if in other places he declares, as he does (together with Isaiah and others), that the Messias shall deliver His people from their sins, the ambiguity is taken off, and the double sense of enemies reduced to the single meaning of iniquities. For if these latter were chiefly in his thought, he might well express them by borrowing the name of the former ; but if his mind was wholly bent on the former, it was impossible he should signify them under the appellation of the latter.

Moses, David, and Isaiah all speak of this victory in the same terms. Must we not, therefore, acknowledge that these terms have the same sense ; and that Moses and David had but one intention, while both speak of men's enemies, and the latter visibly alludes to men's sins ?

Daniel, in his ninth chapter, prays that the people may be delivered from the captivity of their enemies ; but his eye was plainly fixed on their transgressions. And to show that it was so, he proceeds to relate the sending of Gabriel to him, with an assurance that his prayer was heard ; and that after the seventy weeks the people should obtain deliverance from their iniquity, that transgressions should then have an end, and the Redeemer, the most holy, should bring in (not legal, but) everlasting righteousness.

When we are once let into these secrets, it is impossible for us not to discern and apprehend them. Let us read the books of the Old Testament by this light. Let us see

whether Abraham's lineage and descent were the real causes of his being styled the Friend of God? Whether the promised land was the true seat of rest? Neither of these can be affirmed; therefore both were symbolical. In a word, let us examine all the legal ceremonies, and all the precepts which are not of charity, and we shall find them composing one general image, one uninterrupted allegory and prefiguration.

XIV.

JESUS CHRIST.

THE infinite distance that there is between body and spirit does but imperfectly represent to us the distance between spirit and charity, which being altogether supernatural, may be said to be infinitely more infinite.

All the splendour of outward greatness casts no lustre towards the eyes of those who are engaged in the pursuits of wit.

The greatness of wit and parts is wholly undiscernible to the rich, to kings, and conquerors, and to all the great ones of the world.

The greatness of that wisdom which cometh from above is alike imperceptible to the worldly and to the witty. These are three orders of quite different kinds.

Great geniuses have their kingdom and splendour, their victory and glory ; and want not carnal greatness, because it has no relation to the grandeur which they pursue. This grandeur does not, indeed, strike the eyes, but it is enough that it casts a distinguishable radiancy on the soul.

The saints likewise have their empire, their lustre, their

greatness, and their triumphs ; and want not the pomp of honour, or the pride of genius, for these things are quite out of their sphere and order, and such as neither increase nor diminish the grandeur to which they aspire. These truly great ones are equally invisible to bodily eyes and to curious and subtle wits ; but they are manifested to God and angels, and are not ambitious of other spectators.

Archimedes would have gained the same esteem without his relation to the royal blood of Sicily. It is true he won no battles ; but he has left to all the world the benefit of his admirable inventions. Oh, how great, how bright does he appear to the eyes of the mind !

Jesus Christ, without worldly riches, without the exterior productions of science, was infinitely great in His sublime order of holiness. He neither published inventions nor possessed kingdoms ; but He was humble, patient, pure before God, terrible to evil spirits, and without spot of sin. Oh, with what illustrious pomp, with what transcendent magnificence did He come attended, to such as beheld with the eyes of the heart, and with those faculties which are the judges and discerners of true wisdom !

It had been needless for Archimedes, though of princely descent, to have acted the prince in his book of geometry.

It had been needless for our Lord Jesus Christ to have assumed the state of an earthly king, for the illustration of His kingdom of holiness. But how great, how excellent did He appear in the brightness of His proper order !

It is most unreasonable to be scandalised at the mean

condition of our Lord, as if it were opposed in the same order and kind to the greatness which He came to display. Let us consider this greatness in His life, in His sufferings, in His solitude, in His death, in the choice of His attendants, in their act of forsaking Him, in the privacy of His resurrection, and in all the other parts of His history ; we shall find it so truly raised and noble, as to leave no ground for our being offended at a meanness which was quite of another order.

But there are some who can admire only the greatness of this world ; as if there were no proper greatness in wit. And others who are charmed only with greatness of wit, as if there were not still a more noble, a more sublime greatness in wisdom.

The whole system of bodies, the firmament, the stars, the earth, and the kingdoms of it are not fit to be opposed in value to the lowest mind or spirit ; because spirit is endued with the knowledge and apprehension of all this ; whereas body is utterly stupid and insensible. Again, the whole united systems of bodies and spirits are not comparable to the least motion of charity ; because this is still of an order infinitely more exalted and divine.

From all body together, we are not able to extract one thought. This is impossible, and quite of another order. Again, all body and spirit are unable to produce one spark of charity. This is likewise impossible, and of an order above nature.

* Jesus Christ lived in so much obscurity (as to what

the world terms obscure) that the pagan historians, who were wont to record only persons of eminence and things of importance, have scarce afforded Him a slender notice.

* Who amongst men was ever arrayed with so much splendour as our Lord? The whole Jewish nation prophesied of Him before His coming; the Gentile world adored Him at His coming. Both Jews and Gentiles regarded Him as their common centre, their expectation and desire. And yet who had ever so little enjoyment of so abundant glory? Of thirty-three years, thirty He spent in privacy and at a distance from the world. During the three which remained He was censured for an impostor, He was rejected by the priests and rulers of His nation, despised by His kinsmen and friends; and, in conclusion, He suffered a shameful death, betrayed by one of His attendants, abjured by another and deserted by all.

What share then can He be supposed to have borne in all this splendour? Never person was in greater glory; never person was in deeper disgrace. His whole splendour, therefore, was designed for our sakes, and to render Him discernible to us; but not the least ray was reflected back upon Himself.

Our Lord discourses of the sublimest subjects in a phrase so plain and natural as if it had not been deeply considered, but withal so pure and exact as to show that it proceeded from the greatest depth of thought. The joining of this accuracy with this simplicity is admirable.

* Who made the evangelists acquainted with the perfections and qualities of a soul truly heroic, that they should be able to paint it after so inimitable a manner in the person of Jesus Christ? What is the reason that they describe Him weak and desponding in His agony? Did they want skill or colours to represent a patient and constant death? No, certainly; for St. Luke has drawn that of St. Stephen with more bravery than that of our Lord. It was, therefore, wise and just to make Him capable of fear while the necessity of death remained at a distance, but fearless when it arrived. And here again is the remarkable difference: when He appears dejected, the affliction is such as proceeds from Himself; but when afflicted by men, He is all courage and resolution.

* Before the birth of Jesus Christ the Gospel speaks little of the virgin-state of His holy mother, that there might be no part of sacred history but what should directly bear a reference to her Son.

* The Old and New Testament equally regard Jesus Christ, the former as its hope and expectation, the latter as its author and example, both as their common centre and aim.

* The prophets had the gift of foretelling, but never were foretold themselves; the saints which followed were foretold, but had not the power of foretelling; our Lord, as He was the great subject of prophecies, so He was Himself the chief of prophets.

* Jesus Christ for all mankind, Moses for a single nation.

* The Jews were blessed in Abraham ("I will bless them that bless thee"); but all the nations of the earth are blessed in Abraham's seed ("a light to lighten the Gentiles," etc.). He has not done so to any nation, says David, speaking of the law. He has done so to all nations, may we say, speaking of the Gospel.

Thus is it the sole prerogative of Jesus Christ to be an universal benefit and blessing. The sacraments and service of the Church have an effect only on actual believers, the sacrifice of our Lord on the cross extends its meritorious influence to the whole world.

* Let us then stretch out our arms to embrace our merciful Deliverer, who, having been promised four thousand years before, came at length to suffer and to die for us at the time and with the circumstances of the promise; and waiting by His gracious assistance till we shall die in peace, through the hope of being eternally united to Him, let us in the meanwhile live with comfort, whether amongst the good things which He so bountifully gives us to enjoy, or amongst the evil things which He shall please to bring on us for our soul's health, and which, by His own example, He has taught us to sustain.

XV.

THE EVIDENCES OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE PROPHECIES.

THE noblest evidences of our Lord are the prophecies which preceded Him ; and, accordingly, it has pleased God to exercise a peculiar care in this behalf. For the full accomplishment of them, being a perpetual miracle which reacheth from the beginning to the end of the Church, sixteen hundred years together, God raised up a succession of prophets, and during the space of four hundred years after He dispersed these prophecies, together with the Jews that kept them, through all regions of the world. See the wonderful preparation to our Lord's appearance ! As His gospel was to be embraced and believed by all nations, there was a necessity not only of prophecies to gain it this belief, but likewise of diffusing these prophecies to the same extent with human race.

* Supposing one single man to have left a book of predictions concerning Jesus Christ as to the time and manner of His coming, and supposing Him to have come agreeably to these predictions, the argument would be of almost infinite force ; yet here the evidence is stronger beyond all

comparison; a succession of men for the space of four thousand years follow one another, without interruption or variation, in foretelling the same great event. A whole people are the harbingers of the Messias, and such a people as subsisted four thousand years to testify in a general body their assured hope and expectation, from which no severity of threats or persecutions could oblige them to depart. This is a case which challengeth in a far more transcendent degree our assent and wonder.

* The time of our Lord's appearance was signified by the state of the Jews, by the condition of the heathen world, by the comparison between the two Temples, and even by the precise number of years which should intervene.

* The prophets having given various marks of the Messias who was to come, it seemed necessary that these marks should all concur at the same period; thus it was necessary that the fourth monarchy should be established ere the expiration of Daniel's seventy weeks, that the sceptre should then depart from Judah, and that the Messias should then immediately appear; in pursuit of which predictions our Lord appeared at this juncture and demonstrated His claim to the style and character of the Messias.

* It is foretold that under the fourth monarchy, before the destruction of the second Temple, before the dominion of the Jews was taken away, and in the seventieth of Daniel's weeks, the heathens should be led into the knowledge of the only true God, worshipped by the Jews; that

those who sincerely feared and loved Him should be delivered from their enemies, and should be replenished with higher degrees of His fear and love.

We see the event answer in all points. During the time of the fourth monarchy, before the destruction of the second Temple, etc., the pagans in multitudes adored the true God, and embraced a life altogether spiritual and angelic; women consecrated to religion their virginity and their life; men voluntarily renounced all the pleasures and enjoyments of sense. That which Plato was unable to effect upon a few persons, and those the wisest and best instructed of his time, a secret force by the help only of a few words now wrought upon thousands of ignorant, uneducated men.

What means this prodigious change? It is no other than was foretold so many ages since: “effundam spiritum meum super omnem carnem.”¹ The whole world, which lay enslaved to lust and unbelief, was now surprisingly inflamed with the fire of charity. Princes resigned their crowns; the rich abandoned their possessions; the daughters, with an astonishing courage, contended for the prize of martyrdom; the sons forsook their parents and habitations, to embrace the solitude of deserts. Whence springs this unknown and invisible force? The Messias is arrived, behold the effects and the tokens of His coming.

For two thousand years together the God of the Jews remained unknown to an infinite variety of nations over-

¹ Joel ii. 28.

spread with paganism. Yet, at the precise time foretold, the pagans in all nations adore this only true God. The idol temples are everywhere destroyed. Kings themselves submit their sceptres to the Cross. What new thing is this? It is the Spirit of God poured out upon all the earth.

It was testified that the Messias should come to establish a new covenant with His people;¹ such as might make them forget their departure out of Egypt, in comparison with this great deliverance. That He would put His law and His fear into their hearts;² both which rested before in externals only.

That the Jews should reject our Lord; and should themselves be rejected of God,³ the beloved vine bringing forth only wild grapes. That the chosen people should prove disloyal, ungrateful, and incredulous. “Populus non credens et contradicens.”⁴ That God should strike them with blindness;⁵ and that, like blind men, they should stumble at noonday.

That the Church should be narrow in its beginning,⁶ and should afterwards diffuse itself to a prodigious extent.

That idolatry should then be extirpated.⁷ That the Messias should vanquish and expel the false deities, and reduce men to the worship of the true God.

That the idol temples should be cast down; and that in all places of the world⁸ men should offer to God a pure

¹ Jer. xxiii. 7.

⁵ Deut. xxvii. 28, 29.

² Isai. li. 7; Jer. xxxii. 40.

⁶ Ezek. xvii.

³ Isai. v. 2, 3, 4.

⁷ Ezek. xxx. 13.

⁴ Isai. lxv. ii.

⁸ Mal. i. 11.

and holy and living sacrifice in the room of the slain beasts.

That the Messias should instruct men in the true and perfect way.

That He should reign over the Jews and Gentiles.

No person before or since our Lord has been known to teach anything which bears the least affinity to these predictions.

* After so many messengers sent to notify His coming, the Messias was pleased Himself to appear with all the assured evidences of the person, and all the concurring circumstances of the time. He came to inform men that they had properly no other enemies than themselves, or than those passions which separated them from God ; that His office was to set them free from these enemies, to strengthen them with His grace ; to unite them all in one holy Church ; to reconcile Jews and Gentiles by destroying the superstition of the former and the idolatry of the latter.

What the prophets have farther intimated, My Apostles (might He say) shall shortly accomplish. The Jews are on the point of being rejected, and the desolation of Jerusalem draws nigh. The Gentiles shall soon be admitted to the knowledge of the true God ; and these My Apostles shall be their introducers, when you shall have first extinguished your title by slaying the heir of the vineyard.

And the issue of all this was that the Apostles accordingly pronounced the sentence of rejection on the Jews, and

declared the glad tidings of acceptance and salvation to the Gentiles.

And yet, through the power of natural concupiscence was this most divine undertaking opposed by the united force of all mankind. This King of Jews and Gentiles was denied, was oppressed, by both equally conspiring against His life. Whatever is wont to style itself great in the world attacked this religion in its very infancy, the learned, the wise, and the princes of the earth. The first persecuted it with their pen ; the second with their tongue ; the last with their sword. But in spite of all opposition, within how little a space 'do we behold our Lord reigning victoriously over His enemies of every kind, and destroying as well the Jewish as the Gentile worship, each in its chief seat and metropolis, Jerusalem and Rome, planting in one of them the first, in the other the greatest of Churches ?

Persons of mean endowments, and of no authority or strength, such as were the Apostles and primitive Christians, bore up against all the powers of the earth ; overcame the learned, the wise, and the mighty ; gave a total subversion to the idol worship which had so firmly established itself in the world. And all this was brought to pass by the sole virtue and influence of that divine word which foretold our Lord's appearance.

* The Jews in putting to death Jesus Christ, whom they believed not to be the Messias, gave Him the final mark and assurance of the Messias's character. The more they persisted in denying Him, they still became the more infallible

witnesses of His truth. For to disown and to slay Him was but to join their own testimony to that of the prophecies which they fulfilled.

* Who is so ignorant as not to distinguish and acknowledge our Lord, after the numerous prophetical tokens and circumstances of His history? For it was expressly declared:

That He should have one special messenger and forerunner.¹

That He should be born an infant.²

That His birthplace should be the city of Bethlehem; that He should spring from the tribe of Judah, and house of David; that He should exhibit Himself more especially at Jerusalem.³

That He should veil the eyes of the wise and learned,⁴ and preach the gospel to the poor; that He should restore sight to the blind, health to the diseased, and light to those who languished under darkness.⁴

That He should teach the true and perfect way, and should be the great instructor of the Gentiles.⁵

That He should offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.⁶

That He should be the chief corner-stone, elect and precious.⁷

That He should, at the same time, be a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence.⁸

¹ Mal. iii. 1.

⁴ Isai. vi. 8, 29.

⁷ Isai. xxviii. 16.

² Isai. ix. 6.

⁵ Isai. xlvi. 5.

⁸ Isai. viii. 14.

³ Mich. v. 2.

⁶ Isai. liii.

That the Jews should fall upon this rock.¹

That this stone should be rejected by the builders,² should be made by God the head of the corner,³ should grow into a great mountain and fill the whole earth.⁴

That the Messias should be disowned, rejected, betrayed, sold, buffeted, derided, afflicted by a thousand different methods;⁵ that they should give Him gall to eat, should pierce His hands and His feet, should strike Him on the face, should kill Him, and cast lots upon His vesture.⁶

That He should rise again the third day from the dead.⁷

That He should ascend into heaven and sit at the right hand of God.⁸

That kings should arm themselves to oppose His authority.⁹

That sitting at the right hand of the Father He should triumph over all His enemies.¹⁰

That the kings of the earth should fall down before Him, and all nations do Him homage and service.¹¹

That the Jews should still remain.¹²

That they should remain in a wandering and desolate condition, without princes, without sacrifices, without altars, without prophets; ever hoping for safety, and ever disappointed of their hope.¹³

* It was necessary, according to the prophetical de-

¹ Isai. viii. 15.

⁵ Zach. xi. 12.

⁹ Psal. ii. 2.

² Psal. cxviii.

⁶ Psal. Ixix. 21; xxii. 17, 18.

¹⁰ Psal. cx. 1.

³ Ibid.

⁷ Psal. xvi. 10.

¹¹ Isai. Ix. 10.

⁴ Dan. ii. 35.

⁸ Hos. vi. 3; Psal. cx. 2.

¹² Jer. xxxi. 36.

¹³ Hos. iii. 4; Amos, Isaiah.

scriptions, that the Messias, by His own strength, should gather to Himself a numerous people, elect, sacred, and peculiar ; should govern and support them, should lead them into a place of rest and of holiness, should present them blameless before God, should make them temples of the divine presence, should deliver them from the wrath of God and restore them to His favour, should rescue them from the tyranny of sin which so visibly reigned over Adam's posterity ; that He should give laws to His people, and should grave these laws in their hearts and write them in their minds ; that He should be at once a holy priest and a spotless sacrifice ; and that while He offered to God bread and wine He should no less offer His own body and blood. Each of these particulars have we seen exactly performed by Jesus Christ.

Again, it was foretold that He should come as a mighty deliverer that He should bruise Satan's head, and should redeem His people from their sins, "ab omnibus iniquitatibus." That there should be a new and an eternal covenant, and another priesthood for ever, after the order of Melchisedec ; that the Messias should be powerful, mighty, and glorious, and yet so weak, so miserable, and so contemptible as not to be distinguished or credited, but rejected and slain ; that the people who thus rejected Him should be no more a people ; that the Gentiles should receive Him and trust in Him ; that He should remove from the hill of Sion and reign in the chief seats of idolatrous

worship, and that the Jews should nevertheless continue for ever. Lastly, that He should arise out of Judah, and at the precise time, when the sceptre was departed from them.

* The prophets have interwoven particular prophecies with those concerning the Messias, that neither the prophecies concerning the Messias should be without their proof, nor the particular prophecies without their fruit.

* "Non habemus regem, nisi Cæsarem," said the Jews. Therefore Jesus Christ was the Messias, because their sceptre was departed to a stranger, and because they would admit of no other king.

* Daniel's seventy weeks are rendered disputable, as to their beginning, by the terms of the prophecy; and as to their end, by the difference of chronologists. And yet all this variety, taken together, amounts to no more than the space of two hundred years.

* The same prophecies which represent our Lord as under poverty and contempt, describe Him likewise as the prince and master of the world.¹

Those prophecies which express the time of our Lord's coming describe Him as upon earth, and in the condition of a sufferer; not as in the clouds, and in the majesty of a judge; and those which represent Him in glory and judging the nations, give not the least mark whereby to determine the season of His appearance.

¹ Isai. liii. ; Zach. ix. 9.

* When the Scriptures speak of the Messias as great, and triumphant, and glorious, it is evident they are to be understood of His coming to judge the world, not to redeem it.¹

¹ Isai. lxv. 15, 16.

XVI.

DIVERS PROOFS OF JESUS CHRIST.

IN refusing to give credit to the Apostles, it is necessary we should suppose one of these two things: either that they were deceived themselves, or that they had an intention of deceiving others. As to the first, it seems next to impossible that men should be abused into a belief of a person's rising from the dead. And as for the other, the supposition of their being impostors is loaded with absurdities of every kind. Let us be at the pains of examining its process. We are, then, to conceive these twelve men, after the death of their Master, combining to delude the whole world with a report of His resurrection. As they could not embark in this design without bringing upon their heads all the opposition of united strength and power, so the heart of man has a strange inclination towards lightness and change, towards closing with the bribes of promises and rewards. Now should so much as any one of them have been drawn from his resolution by these charms, or have been shaken by prisons, by tortures, or by death itself, all had been undone beyond recovery.

This consideration, if pursued, cannot fail of appearing with great weight and advantage.

* While their Lord continued amongst them, His presence might encourage and support them; but afterwards, what could possibly engage them to proceed, except His real appearance and return?

* The style of the Gospel is admirable in a thousand different views; and in this amongst others, that we meet there with no invectives, on the part of the historians, against Judas, or Pilate, nor against any of the enemies, or the very murderers of their Lord.

Had the modesty and temper of the evangelical writers been affected, like the many strokes of art which we admire in vulgar history; and had they designed it only to be taken notice of, either they could not have forborne to give some insinuation of it themselves; or, at least, they would have procured friends who should observe it to their advantage and honour. But as they acted without any manner of affectation, and with altogether disinterested motions, they never took care to provide any person who should make these reflections in their favour. This, I believe, is what no man has hitherto remarked, and yet what seems an admirable evidence of the great simplicity used in this whole affair.

* As our Lord performed miracles in person, and His Apostles after Him, so many others were wrought by the holy men in the first ages of Christianity; because the prophecies being in some measure still imperfect till they

should receive an accomplishment from their hands, their miracles were the only sufficient testimony of their commission. It was foretold that the Messias should convert the Gentiles. But now the Gentiles could not be converted to the Messias without beholding this final effect of the prophecies concerning Him. Before, therefore, that He died and rose again, and that the Gentiles were converted through His name, all was not yet fulfilled. So that a constant series of miracles was necessary during this period. But in our days there is no need of miraculous performances to evince the truth of our Christian faith ; inasmuch as the full completion of the prophecies is a standing and perpetual miracle.

* Another signal confirmation of our faith is the present condition of the Jews. It is astonishing to see this people, during so vast a course of years, never extinguished, and yet ever miserable ; it being alike necessary to the demonstration of the Messias, both that they should subsist to be His witnesses, and should be miserable as having been His crucifiers. And though to subsist and to be miserable are contrarieties ungrateful to nature, yet they fail not to maintain their subsistence under all the power of their misery.

But were they not reduced to almost the same extremities during their captive estate ? No. The sceptre and regal line was not in the least interrupted by their captivity in Babylon ; because their happy return was expressly promised and determined. When Nabuchodonosor carried away the

people, for fear they should imagine the sceptre to have then departed from Judah, they were beforehand assured that they should sojourn but a few years, and at the end of them should certainly be re-established. They were never without the comfort of their prophets or the presence of their kings. But the second ruin of their city and polity is without promise of a restoration ; without prophets, without kings, without comfort or hopes ; the sceptre being now for ever departed from them.

To be detained in an enemy's country, with an assurance of being delivered after seventy years, can scarce be looked on as a state of captivity in respect of a whole people. But their present dispersion and banishment into strange lands is not only without assurance, but without the least hope of recovery and restitution.

* We find it a solemn promise of God to them that, though they should be scattered to the corners of the earth, yet upon their perseverance in His law He would gather them again. They are now in the highest manner constant to their worship and tenacious of their rites, and yet remain dispersed and distressed. It follows, therefore, of necessity, that the Messias is come, and that the old law, which contained these promises, has been disannulled by the establishment of the new.

* Had the Jews been entirely converted by our Lord, we should have none but suspected witnesses ; had they been entirely destroyed, we should have no witnesses at all.

* As the Jews rejected Christ, but not universally, so spiritual men now embrace Him, but not carnal. And this is so far from diminishing or impairing His glory, that it is the last stroke which perfects and adorns it.

* The only argument of the Jews which we find insisted on in their writings—the Talmud and the Rabbins—is that Jesus Christ did not appear as a mighty prince and conqueror, did not subdue the nations by the force and terror of arms. Jesus Christ, say they, suffered and died ; He overcame not the Gentiles by martial power ; He loaded us not with their spoils ; He neither enlarged our dominions nor increased our stores. And is this all they have to allege ? This is what we have especially to boast. It is in this that He appears so peculiarly amiable to my eyes. I would not wish for a Messias of their description and character.

* How lovely a sight is it to behold, with the eye of faith, Darius, Cyrus, and Alexander, the Romans, Pompey, and Herod, all ignorantly conspiring to advance the triumphs of the Cross ?

XVII

AGAINST MAHOMET.

THE Mahometan religion has for its foundation the Alcoran, and its compiler Mahomet. But now as for this great prophet who was to be the last expectation of mankind, where do we find him once foretold? Or what token has he to show which any man might not as well produce who should please to assume the pretensions of prophecy? What miracles does he himself tell us that he wrought? What mysteries does he teach, even according to his own report and tradition? What morality has he established? What felicity has he proposed?

* Mahomet brings not with him the least authority or credentials. His reasons, therefore, ought to be the most cogent in the world, as having nothing to support them but their own proper force.

* Suppose two persons should both of them deliver things in appearance of a low and mean character, but so that the discourses of the one should have a twofold sense understood by his friends and followers, while those of the

other had but one meaning only ; a stranger who had not been admitted into the secret, hearing them speak in this manner, would be inclined to pass the same judgment on both. But if afterwards in the remaining part of their conversation, the one should disclose sublime and angelic truths, the other should persist in uttering things base and vulgar, and even foolish and impertinent, he must conclude that the one spoke mysteriously and not the other ; the one having evidenced that he is incapable of absurdity, and capable of being mysterious ; the other that he is incapable of mystery, but very capable of being absurd.

* It is not by the obscurer parts of Mahomet's doctrine, and those which bear an appearance of some hidden meaning, that I would have persons judge of the author ; but by those things which are clear and express, as his Paradise, and the like. It is in these that he is most peculiarly ridiculous. No such imputation can pass on the Holy Scriptures. They too, it must be confessed, have their obscurities ; but then their plainer doctrines are admirably just and true ; and the prophecies they allege are such as have been notoriously accomplished. The case, therefore, is as different as can be conceived ; nor ought we to compare and confound things which resemble each other only in obscurity, not in their clear and open parts ; for the latter, when excellent and divine, should engage us to reverence the obscurities with which they are attended.

* The Alcoran says Matthew was a good man. Hence I argue that Mahomet was a false prophet, either in calling

wicked men good, or in disbelieving these good men as to what they report of Jesus Christ.

* What Mahomet did, lies within any man's reach. He was authorised by no miracle, he was countenanced by no prediction. But what was performed by Jesus Christ is absolutely above the power and the imitation of man.

* Mahomet established himself by killing ; Jesus Christ, by commanding us to lay down our lives. Mahomet, by forbidding his law to be read ; Jesus Christ, by engaging us to search and read. In a word, the two designs are in all respects so directly opposite that Mahomet took the way, in human probability, to succeed ; Jesus Christ, humanly speaking, to be disappointed. And hence, instead of so irrational a conclusion as that because Mahomet succeeded, Jesus Christ might, in like manner, have succeeded before, we ought by the rule of contraries to infer that since Mahomet has succeeded, Christianity must inevitably have perished had it not been founded and supported by a power altogether divine.

XVIII.

FOR WHAT REASONS WE MAY PRESUME IT HAS PLEASED
GOD TO HIDE HIMSELF FROM SOME, AND TO DISCLOSE
HIMSELF TO OTHERS.

It has been the gracious purpose of God to redeem mankind, and to open a door of salvation to those who diligently seek Him. But men have shown themselves so unworthy of this design that He justly denies to some, on account of their obstinacy, what He grants to others by a mercy which is not their due. Were it His pleasure to overbear the stubbornness of the most hardened unbelievers He could easily effect it by discovering Himself so manifestly to them, as to set the truth of His existence beyond the possibility of their disputes. And it is in this manner that He will appear at the last day; with such amazing terrors and such a convulsion of all nature that the most blind shall behold and shall confess Him.

But this is not the way which He has chosen for His first and milder coming; because, so many persons having rendered themselves thus unworthy of His mercy, He has left them deprived of a happiness which they vouchsafed

not to desire, It had not therefore been consistent with His justice to assume an appearance every way great and divine, and capable of working in all men an absolute and undistinguished conviction. Nor, on the other hand, would it have seemed more equitable to have used so much privacy and concealment as not to be discoverable by sincere inquirers. So that intending no less to reveal Himself to those who sought Him with their whole heart, than to hide Himself from those who were alike industrious to fly and avoid Him, He has so tempered the knowledge of Himself as to exhibit bright and visible indications to those who seek Him, and to turn the pillar of a cloud towards those who seek Him not.

* There is a due proportion of light for those who, above all things, wish that they may see; and a proper mixture of shade for those who are of a contrary disposition.

There is enough brightness to illuminate the elect, and enough obscurity to humble them.

There is obscurity enough to blind the reprobates, and brightness enough to condemn them, and to render them without excuse.

Did the world subsist purely to inform men of the being of God, His divinity would shine through it with irresistible and uncontested rays. But inasmuch as it subsists only by Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ, and to inform men of their corruption and redemption, we read these two lessons in every part of its frame. For all the objects

which we can survey are such as denote neither the total exclusion nor the manifest presence of God ; or they denote the presence of a God *who hides Himself*. The face of nature bears this universal character and language.

* Had men never been honoured with the appearance of God, this eternal privation might have been the subject of dispute, and as well have been interpreted of His utter absence from the world, as of human incapacity to enjoy His presence. But by affording some, though not continual appearances, He has taken away all ground of doubt and debate. If He has appeared once, He exists for ever. So that we are obliged jointly to conclude from the whole, the being of God, and the unworthiness of man.

* It seems to be the divine intention to perfect the will rather than the understanding. But now a convincing light and a perfect brightness, while it assisted the understanding, would forestall and defeat the will.

* Were there no intermixture of darkness, man would not be sensible of his disease ; and were there no degree of light, man would despair of a remedy. So that not only the divine justice but human interest and advantage seem concerned that God should discover Himself in part, and conceal Himself in part ; it being alike dangerous for us to know God without apprehending our own misery, and to know our own misery without the apprehension of God.

* Everything instructs man in his own condition ; but then this maxim ought rightly to be understood. For it is

neither true that God altogether discovers Himself, nor that He remains altogether concealed. But these are most consistent truths, that He hides Himself from those who tempt Him, and discloses Himself to those who seek Him. For men, though unworthy of God, yet at the same time are capable of God. They are unworthy of Him by their corruption; and they are capable of Him by their original perfection.

* There is no object upon earth which does not speak and proclaim either divine mercy or human misery; either the impotence of man unassisted by God, or the power of man with God's concurrence and aid.

* The whole universe teaches man either that he is distempered and lapsed, or that he is recovered and redeemed. Everything informs him either of his greatness or of his misery. The just dereliction of God we may read in the pagans, His merciful favour and protection in the ancient Jews.

* All things work together for good to the elect, even the obscurities of Scripture, which these honour and reverence on account of that divine clearness and beauty which they understand. And all things work together for evil to the reprobates, even the divine clearness and beauty of Scripture, which these blaspheme on account of the obscurities which they understand not.

* Had the design of our Lord's coming been the work of justification only, the whole series of Scripture and disposition of things would have been directed towards

this end, and it had been then the easiest task in the world to convince an unbeliever. But since He came, as Isaiah prophetically speaks, "in sanctificationem et in scandalum," perverse infidelity is above our strength to conquer, and our art to cure. But then this disappointment cannot be made an exception against our own belief, because we affirm that in all the conduct and methods of divine grace, there is no conviction for opiniative, obstinate spirits, and such as do not sincerely seek the truth.

* Jesus Christ is come, that those who ~~see~~ not may see, and that those who see may be made ~~blind~~ ^{wise}. He is come to heal the sick, and to give over the sound; to call sinners to repentance and justification, and to leave those in their sins who trusted in themselves that ~~they~~ were saints; to fill the hungry with good things, and to send the rich empty away.

* It was to render the Messias alike the subject of knowledge to the good, and of error to the wicked, that it pleased God so to dispose the predictions concerning Him. For had the manner of His appearance been expressly foretold, there would not have been obscurity enough to mislead the worst of men. On the other hand, had the time been signified obscurely, the best of men would have wanted evidence and light. For instance, the integrity of their heart could never have assisted them in expounding a single ☐ for the numeral of six hundred years. The time, therefore, was declared in positive words; but the manner wrapt up in shade and figure.

By this means the wicked, apprehending the promised goods to be temporal, deceived themselves, notwithstanding the clear indications of the time; while the righteous avoided this danger of mistake. For the construction of the promised goods depended on the heart, which is wont to apply the name of good to the object of its love, whereas the construction of the promised time has no dependence on the heart or affections. And thus the plain discovery of the time, and the obscure description of the goods or happiness expected, could be the cause of error only to the ~~wit~~^{of} d.

* What was the design of that opposition in the marks of the Messias, that by His hand the sceptre should be eternally fixed in Judah, and that at His coming the sceptre should be taken from Judah?

To evince, "that seeing, they should not see, and understanding, they should not understand." Nothing could have been disposed with more admirable justice and wisdom.

* Instead of complaining that God is so far removed from our search, we ought to give Him thanks that He is so obvious to our discovery. Nor ought we less to thank Him that He still hides Himself from the wise and the lofty, from those who are unworthy to know so pure and holy a God.

* The genealogy of our Lord in the Old Testament is intermixed with so many things of little consequence, that there seems to be some difficulty in discerning it. Had

Moses kept no other register but that of the pedigree of Jesus Christ, the series must have been visible; and even now, upon a closer inspection, we may be able to trace it in Thamar, Ruth, etc.

* Those things in the Gospels which have the greatest appearance of weakness or error, are of peculiar force and weight with discerning judges; for instance, the different genealogies of St. Matthew and St. Luke, it being manifest that this could not be done by confederacy.

* Let men, therefore, reproach us ~~not~~ AND ~~not~~ with the want of perfect light; for we profess ourselves to want it. But let them own the power and truth of religion in its very obscurity, in that mixture of darkness which surrounds us, and that indifference which we find in ourselves towards the knowledge of our duty.

* Were there but one religion in the world, the discoveries of the divine nature might seem too free and open, and with too little distinction; and so likewise, if there were martyrs in no religion but the true.

* Jesus Christ, to leave the impious in their blindness, never expressly told them that He was not of Nazareth, or that He was not the son of Joseph.

* As our Lord remained unknown amongst men, so truth remains amongst vulgar opinions, undistinguished as to external appearance. In like manner the holy Eucharist differs not outwardly from common bread.

* If the mercy of God be so abundant as to afford us

all saving knowledge, even while He hides Himself, what immense light may we expect when He shall please to unveil His perfections?

* We can understand nothing of the works of God, if we do not settle this as a principle, that He blinds and infatuates some, while He inspires and illuminates others.

XIX.

THAT THE TRUE PROFESSORS OF JUDAISM AND OF CHRISTIANITY HAVE EVER BEEN OF ONE AND THE SAME RELIGION.

THE Jewish religion seems, at first view, to consist, as to its very essence, in the paternity of Abraham, in the rite of circumcision, in sacrifices, in ceremonies, in the ark, in the Temple at Jerusalem, or, briefly, in the law and the covenant of Moses.

But we offer to maintain that it consisted in none of these, but purely in the love of God ; and that, besides this, nothing ever obtained the divine approbation and acceptance.

That God bore no manner of regard to Israel after the flesh, to those who proceeded out of the loins of Abraham.

That the Jews, if they transgressed, were to be punished after the manner of strangers. “ And it shall be, that if you do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations

which the Lord destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish.”¹

That strangers, if they loved God, were to be received by Him on the same terms with the Jews.

That those who were Jews in truth and reality ascribed all their merit and pretensions not to Abraham, but to God: “Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel knoweth us not: thou art our father and our redeemer.”²

Moses himself assured his nation that God was no accepter of persons. “The Lord your God,” says he, “regardeth not persons, nor taketh rewards.”³

We affirm that the circumcision enjoined was that of the heart: “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked. For the Lord your God is a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, who regardeth not persons,”⁴ etc.

That God particularly promised to bestow on them this grace of spiritual circumcision: “And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.”⁵

That the uncircumcised in heart shall be judged of God: “For God will judge all the nations which are uncircumcised; and all the people of Israel, because they are uncircumcised in heart.”⁶

¹ Deut. viii. 19, 20.

⁴ Deut. x. 16, 17; Jer. iv. 4.

² Isai. Ixiii. 16.

⁵ Deut. xxx. 6.

³ Deut. x. 17.

⁶ Jer. ix. 25, 26.

We say that circumcision was purely a figure, instituted to distinguish the people of the Jews from all other nations.¹ And this was the reason that they used it not in the wilderness, because there was then no danger of their mixing with strangers; as also that since the appearance of our Lord it is become altogether unnecessary.

That the love of God is everywhere principally commanded and enforced: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live; that thou mayst love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayst obey his voice, and that thou mayst cleave unto him; for he is thy life,"² etc.

It was declared that the Jews, for want of this love of God, should be abandoned to their sins, and the Gentiles admitted in their stead: "I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be; for they are a very forward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God, they have provoked me to anger with their vanities; and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people, I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation."³

That temporal goods are false and vain, and that the only true and lasting good is the divine acceptance and favour.⁴

That the feasts of the Jews were displeasing to God.⁵

¹ Gen. xvii. 1.

² Deut. xxx. 19, 20.

³ Deut. xxxii. 20, 21; Isai. lxv.

⁴ Ps. xxviii. 28.

⁵ Amos v. 2.

That their sacrifices¹ were no less disagreeable. And not only those of the wicked, but even of the good, as appears from the fiftieth Psalm; where before the discourse is peculiarly addressed to the wicked by those words, "Peccatori autem dixit Deus," it is declared absolutely that God has no regard to the flesh or the blood of beasts.

That the offerings of the Gentiles should be received by God, and that He should withdraw His acceptance from the offerings of the Jews.²

That God would make a new covenant by the Messias;³ and that the old covenant should be disannulled.

That the old things should be universally forgotten, and should pass away.⁴

That the ark of the covenant should come no more to mind.⁵

That the Temple should be given up and destroyed.⁶

That the legal sacrifices should be abolished, and sacrifices of a purer kind established in their room.⁷

That the Aaronical order of priesthood should be dissolved, and the order of Melchisedec introduced by the Messias.⁸

That this latter priesthood should be an ordinance for ever.⁹

That Jerusalem should be reprobated; and a new name given to the elect people.¹⁰

¹ Isai. lxvii. ; Jer. vi. 20. ² Mal. i. 11; 1 Kings xv. 22; Hos. vi. 6.

³ Jer. xxxi. 31. ⁶ Jer. vii. 12, 13, 14. ⁹ Ps. cx.

⁴ Isai. xliii. 18, 19. ⁷ Mal. i. 10. ¹⁰ Isai. lxv.

⁵ Jer. iii. 6. ⁸ Ps. cx.

That this new name should be more excellent than that of the Jews, and of eternal duration.¹

That the Jews should remain without prophets, without kings, without sacrifices, and without an altar ;² and should, nevertheless, subsist as a distinct people.

¹ Isai. lvi. 5.

² Hos. iii. 4.

XX.

THAT GOD IS NOT KNOWN TO ADVANTAGE, BUT THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

THE greatest part of those who attempt to demonstrate the truth of the Divine Being to the ungodly and profane, commonly begin with the works of nature; and in this method they very rarely succeed. I would not seem to impair the validity of these proofs, which have been consecrated by the Holy Scripture itself. They have, indeed, an undeniable agreement with the principles of sound reason; but are very often not so well suited and proportioned to that disposition of spirit which is peculiar to the persons here described.

For we must observe that discourses of this kind are not ordinarily addressed to men whose hearts abound with a lively faith, and who immediately discern the whole system of things to be no other than the workmanship of that God whom they adore. To these "the heavens declare the glory of God," and all nature speaks in behalf of its Author. But as for those in whom this light is extinct, and in whom we endeavour to revive it, persons who are

destitute of faith and charity, and who behold nothing but clouds and darkness on the whole face of nature, it seems not the most probable method of their conversion to offer them nothing more, on a subject of the last importance, than the course of the moon or planets, or than such arguments as they every day hear, and every day despise. The hardness and obstinacy of their temper has rendered them deaf to this voice of nature, which sounds continually in their ears; and experience informs us that instead of our gaining them by such a process, there is nothing which, on the contrary, is so great a discouragement, and so apt to make them despair of ever finding the truth, as when we undertake to convince them by this way of reasoning, and pretend to tell them that truth shines so bright in these views as to become really irresistible.

The Holy Scripture, which knows so much better than we the things which belong to God, never speaks of them in this manner. It informs us, indeed, that the beauty of the creature leads to the knowledge of the Creator; but it does by no means assure us that the creatures produce this effect indifferently in all persons. On the contrary, it declares, that whenever they appear thus convincing, it is not by their own force, but by means of that light which God diffuseth into the hearts of those to whom He is pleased to discover Himself by their means and intervention: "Quod notum est Dei manifestum est in illis: Deus enim illis manifestavit." It teacheth, in general, that our God is a God who hideth Himself, "Verè tu es Deus absconditus;"

and that since the corruption of human nature, He has left men under such a blindness as they can only be delivered from by Jesus Christ ; without whom we are cut off from all communication with the Divinity : “ *Nemo novit Patrem nisi Filius, aut cui voluerit Filius revelare.* ”

The Scripture gives us a farther evidence of this truth, when it so often testifies that God is found by those who seek Him ; for it could never speak thus of a clear and certain light, such as gives not men the trouble of searching after it, but freely diffuseth itself around, and prevents the observation of the beholders.

* The metaphysical proofs of God are so very intricate, and so far removed from the common reasonings of men, that they strike with little force ; or, at best, the impression continues but a short space, and men, the very next hour, fall back into their old jealousies, and their perpetual fear and suspicion of being deceived : “ *Quod curiositate cognoverant superbia amiserunt.* ”

Again, all the arguments of this abstracted kind are able to lead us no farther than to a speculative knowledge of God ; and to know Him only thus, is, in effect, not to know Him at all.

The God of Christians is not barely the supreme and infallible Author of geometrical truths, or of the elementary order, and the disposition of nature ; this is the divinity of philosophers and pagans. Nor barely the providential disposer of the lives and fortunes of men, so as to crown His worshippers with a long and happy series of years ;

this was the portion of the Jews. But the God of Abraham and of Isaac, the God of Christians, is a God of love and consolation ; a God who possesseth the hearts and souls of His servants ; gives them an inward feeling of their own misery, and of His infinite mercy ; unites Himself to their spirit, replenishing it with humility and joy, with affiance and love ; and renders them incapable of any prospect, any aim, but Himself.

The God of Christians is a God who makes the soul perceive and know that He is her only good, and that she can find peace and repose in Him alone ; no delight, no joy, but in His love ; and who, at the same time, inspires her with an abhorrence of those obstacles and impediments which withhold her from loving Him with all her strength. As her two principal hindrances, self-love and concupiscence, are grievous and insupportable to her, so it is this gracious God who makes her know and feel that she has these fatal distempers rooted in her constitution, and that His hand alone can expel or subdue them.

This is to know God as a Christian. But to know Him after this manner, we must, at the same time, know our own misery and unworthiness, together with the need we have of a Mediator, in order to our approaching His presence, or uniting ourselves to Him. We ought by no means to separate these parts of knowledge ; because each alone is not only unprofitable, but dangerous. The knowledge of God, without the knowledge of our own misery, is the nurse of pride. The knowledge of our own misery,

without the knowledge of Jesus Christ, is the mother of despair. But the true knowledge of Jesus Christ exempts us alike from pride and from despair ; by giving us, at once, a sight not only of God and of our misery, but also of the mercy of God in the relief of our misery.

We may know God without knowing our own miseries ; or we may know our own miseries without knowing God ; or we may know both without knowing the means of obtaining from God the relief of our miseries. But we cannot know Jesus Christ without the knowledge of God, of our miseries, and of their cure. Inasmuch as Jesus Christ is not only God, but He is God under this character, the healer and repairer of our miseries.

Thus all they who seek God without Jesus Christ can never meet with such light in their inquiries as may afford them true satisfaction, or solid use. For either they advance not so far as to know that there is a God ; or if they do, yet they arrive hereby but at an unprofitable knowledge, because they frame to themselves a method of communicating with God ; without a mediator, as without a mediator they were capable of knowing Him. So that they unavoidably fall either into atheism or deism, things which the Christian religion does almost equally detest and abhor.

We ought therefore wholly to direct our inquiries to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, because it is by Him alone that we can pretend to know God in such a manner as shall be really advantageous to us.

He alone is the true God to us *men*, that is, to miserable

and sinful creatures. He is our chief centre and supreme object in respect of all that we can wish, and all that we can understand. Whoever knows not Him, knows nothing either in the order of the world or in his own nature and condition. For as we know God only by Jesus Christ, so it is by Him alone that we know ourselves.

Without Jesus Christ man is, of necessity, to be considered as lying in vice and misery ; with Jesus Christ man appears as released from vice, and redeemed from misery. In Him consists all our happiness, and all our virtue, our life and light, our hope and assurance. Out of Him there is no prospect but of sins and miseries, of darkness and despair ; nothing to be beheld by us but obscurity and confusion in the divine nature, and in our own.

XXI.

THE STRANGE CONTRARIETIES DISCOVERABLE IN HUMAN NATURE, WITH REGARD TO TRUTH AND HAPPINESS, AND MANY OTHER THINGS.

NOTHING can be more astonishing in the nature of man than the contrarieties which we there observe, with regard to all things. He is made for the knowledge of truth. This is what he most ardently desires, and most eagerly pursues ; yet when he endeavours to lay hold on it, he is so dazzled and confounded as never to be secure of actual possession. Hence the two sects of the Pyrrhonians and the Dogmatists took their rise ; of which the one would utterly deprive men of all truth, the other would infallibly ensure their inquiries after it. But each with so improbable reasons as only to increase our confusion and perplexity, while we are guided by no other lights than those which we find in our own bosom.

The principal arguments of the Pyrrhonians, or Sceptics, are as follow. If we accept faith and revelation, we can have no other certainty as to the truth of principles, than that we naturally feel and perceive them within ourselves.

But now this inward perception is no convictive evidence of their truth; because, since without faith we have no assurance whether we were made by a good God, or by some evil *dæmon*; nay, whether we have not existed from eternity or been the offspring of chance. It may be doubted whether these principles within us are true or false, - or uncertain in correspondence to our original. Indeed, it is by faith alone which we can distinguish whether we are asleep or awake; because in our sleep we as strongly fancy ourselves to be waking as when we really are so. We imagine that we see space, figure, and motion. We perceive the time pass away; we measure it as it runs. In fine, we act, to all intents, as in our most wakeful hours. Since, then, by our own confession, one-half of our life is spent in sleep, during which, whatever we may suppose, we have really no idea of truth, all that then passeth within us being mere illusion, who can tell but that the other moiety of our life, in which we fancy ourselves to be awake, is no more than a second sleep, little differing from the former; and that we only rouse ourselves from our sleep by day when we enter into that at night; as it is usual with us to dream that we dream, by heaping one fantastic image upon another?

I waive the discourse of the same sect against the impressions of custom, education, manners, and climates, with other the like prejudices, which they observe to govern the greatest part of mankind, who are wont to reason on no other than these false foundations.

The main fort of the Dogmatists is this, that, would we but speak honestly and sincerely, there is no man who can doubt of natural principles. We are capable of truth, say they, not only by reasoning, but by perception, and by a bright and lively act of immediate intelligence. It is by this latter way that we arrive at the knowledge of first principles ; which the forces of reason would attack in vain, as here acting beyond the province and commission. The sceptics who labour to bring all things to their own standard, are under a continual disappointment. We may be very well assured of our being awake, though very unable to demonstrate it by reason. This inability shows, indeed, the feebleness of our rational powers, but not the general incertitude of our knowledge. We apprehend with no less confidence that there are such things in the world as space, time, motion, number, and matter, than the most regular and demonstrative conclusions. Nay, it is upon this certainty of perception and intellection, that reason ought to fix itself, and to found the whole method of its process. I perceive that there are three dimensions in space, and that number is infinite ; hence my reason demonstrates that there are no two square numbers assignable, one of which shall exactly double the other. We apprehend principles, and we conclude propositions ; and both with the like assurance, though by different ways. Nor is it less ridiculous for reason to demand of these perceptive and intellective faculties, a proof of their maxims ere it consents to them, than it would be for the said faculties to demand of reason

a clear perception and intuition of all the problems it demonstrates. This defect, therefore, may serve to the humbling of reason, which pretends to be the judge of all things, but not to the shaking off certainty, as if reason were alone able to inform our judgment. On the contrary, it were to be wished that we had less occasion for rational deductions; and that we knew all things by instinct and immediate view. But nature has denied us this favour, and allows us but few notices of so easy a kind, leaving us to work out the rest by laborious consequences and a continued series of argument.

We see here a universal war proclaimed amongst mankind. We must of necessity list ourselves on one side or on the other; for he that pretends to stand neuter is most effectually of the Pyrrhonian party; this neutrality constitutes the very essence of Pyrrhonism; and he that is not against the sceptics must be, in a superlative manner, for them. What shall a man do under these circumstances? Shall he question everything? shall he doubt whether he is awake, whether another pinches him or burns him? Shall he doubt whether he doubts? Shall he doubt whether he exists? It seems impossible to come to this, and therefore, I believe, there never was a finished sceptic, a Pyrrhonian in perfection. There is a secret force in nature which sustains the weakness of reason, and hinders it from losing itself in such a degree of extravagance. Well, but shall a man join himself to the opposite faction? Shall he boast that he is in sure possession of truth, when, if we press him

never so little, he can produce no title, and must be obliged to quit his hold?

What measures can suppress or compose this embroilment? The Pyrrhonians, we see, are confounded by nature, and the Dogmatists by reason. To what a distracting misery will that man, therefore, be reduced, who shall seek the knowledge of his own condition, by the bare light and guidance of his own powers; it being alike impossible for him to avoid both these sects, and to repose himself in either!

Such is the portrait of man with regard to truth. Let us now behold him in respect of felicity, which he prosecutes with so much warmth through his whole course of action. For all desire to be happy. This general rule is without exception. Whatever variety there may be in the means employed, there is but one end universally pursued. The reason why one man embraceth the hazard of war, and why another declines it, is but the same desire, attended in each with a different intermediate view. This is the sole motive to every action of every person; and even of such as most unnaturally become their own executioners.

And yet, after the course of so many ages, no person without faith has ever arrived at this point, towards which all continually tend. The whole world is busy in complaining: princes and subjects, nobles and commons, old and young, the strong and the feeble, the learned and the ignorant, the healthy and the diseased, of all countries, all times, all ages, and all conditions.

So long, so constant, so regular and uniform a proof ought fully to convince us of the disability we lie under towards the acquisition of happiness by our own strength. But example will not serve for our instruction in this case ; because there being no resemblance so exact as not to admit some nicer difference, we are hence disposed to think that our expectation is not so liable to be deceived on one occasion as on another. Thus the present never satisfying us, the future decoys and lures us on, till from one misfortune to another it leads us into death, the sum and perfection of eternal complicated misery.

This is next to a miracle, that there should not be any one thing in nature which has not been some time fixed as the last end and happiness of man ; neither stars, nor elements, nor plants, nor animals, nor insects, nor diseases, nor war, nor vice, nor sin. Man being fallen from his natural estate, there is no object so extravagant as not to be capable of attracting his desire. Ever since the time that he lost his real good, everything cheats him with the appearance of it ; even his own destruction, though the greatest contradiction to reason and nature at once.

Some have sought after felicity in honour and authority, others in curiosity and knowledge, and a third tribe in the pleasures and enjoyments of sense. These three leading desires have constituted as many factions ; and those whom we compliment with the name of philosophers, have really done nothing else but resigned themselves up to one of the three. Such amongst them as made the nearest approaches

to truth and happiness well considered that it was necessary the universal good which all desire, and in which each man ought to be allowed his portion, should not consist in any of the private blessings of this world, which can be properly enjoyed but by one alone, and which, if divided, do more grieve and afflict each possessor, for the want of the part which he has not, than they oblige and gratify him with the part which he has. They rightly apprehended that the true good ought to be such as all may possess at once, without diminution, and without contention ; and such as no man can be deprived of against his will. They apprehended this ; but they were unable to attain and execute it ; and instead of a solid substantial happiness, took up at last with the empty shadow of a fantastic virtue.

Our instinct suggests to us that we ought to seek our happiness within ourselves. Our passions hurry us abroad, even when there are no objects to engage and incite them. The things without are themselves our tempters, and charm and attract us, while we think of nothing less. Therefore the wisest philosophers might weary themselves with crying, Keep within yourselves, and your felicity is in your own gift and power. The generality never gave them credit ; and those who were so easy as to believe them, became only the more unsatisfied and the more ridiculous. For is there anything so vain as the Stoics' happiness, or so groundless as the reasons on which they build it ?

They conclude that what has been done once, may be done always ; and that because the desire of glory has

sometimes spurred on its votaries to great and worthy actions, all others may use it with the same success. But these are the motions of fever and frenzy, which sound health and judgment can never imitate.

The civil war between reason and passion has occasioned two opposite projects for the restoring of peace to mankind : the one, of those who were for renouncing their passions, and becoming gods ; the other, of those who were for renouncing their reason, and becoming beasts. But neither the one nor the other could take effect. Reason ever continues to accuse the baseness and injustice of the passions, and to disturb the repose of those who abandon themselves to their dominion. And, on the contrary, the passions remain lively and vigorous in the hearts of those who talk the most of their extirpation.

This is the just account of human nature and human strength, in respect of truth and happiness. We have an idea of truth, not to be effaced by all the wiles of the sceptic ; we have an incapacity of argument, not to be rectified by all the power of the dogmatist. We wish for truth, and find nothing in our lives but uncertainty. We seek after happiness, and are presented with nothing but misery. Our double aim is in effect a double torture ; while we are alike unable to compass either, and to relinquish either. These desires seem to have been left in us, partly as a punishment of our fall, and partly as an indication and remembrance whence we are fallen.

* If man was not made for God, why is God alone

sufficient for human happiness? If man was made for God, why is the human will in all things repugnant to the divine?

* Man is at a loss where to fix himself, and how to recover his rank in the world. He is unquestionably out of his way; he feels within himself the small remains of his once happy state, which he is now unable to retrieve. And yet this is what he daily courts and follows after, always with solicitude and never with success; encompassed with darkness, which he can neither escape nor penetrate.

Hence arose the grand contention amongst the philosophers, some of whom endeavoured to raise and exalt man by displaying his greatness; others to depress and abase him by representing his misery. And what seems more strange is, that each party borrowed from the other the ground of their own opinion. For the misery of man may be inferred from his greatness, as his greatness is deducible from his misery. Thus the one sect with more evidence demonstrated his misery in that they derived it from his greatness; and the other more strongly concluded his greatness, because they founded it on his misery. Whatever was offered to justify his greatness in behalf of one tribe, served only to evince his misery in behalf of the other; it being more miserable to have fallen from the greater height. And the same proportion holds *vice versa*. So that in this endless circle of dispute, each helped to advance his adversary's cause; for it is certain that the more degrees of light men enjoy, the more degrees they are able

to discern of misery and of greatness. In a word, man knows himself to be miserable. He is therefore exceedingly miserable, because he knows that he is so. But he likewise appears to be eminently great, from this very act of knowing himself to be miserable.

What a chimæra then is man! What a surprising novelty! What a confused chaos! What a subject of contradiction! A professed judge of all things, and yet a feeble worm of the earth; the great depositary and guardian of truth, and yet a mere huddle of uncertainty; the glory and the scandal of the universe. If he is too aspiring and lofty, we can lower and humble him; if too mean and little, we can raise and swell him. To conclude. We can bait him with repugnancies and contradictions, till at length he apprehends himself to be a monster, even beyond apprehension.

XXII.

THE GENERAL KNOWLEDGE OF MAN.

THE first thing which offers itself to man, when reflecting on himself, is his body, or such a certain portion of matter allotted and appropriated to him. And yet to understand what this portion is, he must be obliged to compare it with all things that are above or below him, ere he can determine and adjust its bounds. Let him not therefore content himself with the sight of those objects which immediately surround him. Let him contemplate all nature, in its height of perfection and fulness of majesty. Let him consider the great body of the sun, set up as an eternal lamp to enlighten the universe. Let him suppose the earth to be only a point, in respect of the vast circuit which this luminary describes. And, for his greater astonishment, let him observe that even this vast circuit is but a point itself compared with the firmament and the orb of the fixed stars. If his sight be limited here, let his imagination, at least, pass beyond. He may sooner exhaust the power of conceiving than nature can want a new store to furnish out his conceptions. The whole extent of visible things is but one

line or stroke in the ample bosom of nature. No idea can reach the immeasurable compass of her space. We may grow as big as we please with notion ; but we shall bring forth mere atoms, instead of real and solid discoveries. This is an infinite sphere, the centre of which is everywhere, and the circumference nowhere. In a word, it is the greatest amongst all the sensible marks and characters of the almighty power of God. And let our imagination lose itself in this reflection.

If a man can recover himself from such a prospect, let him consider what he himself is if compared with the whole expansion of being. Let him conclude that he is accidentally strayed into this blind corner of nature ; and from what he finds of his present dungeon, let him learn to set the proper value on the earth, on kingdoms, on cities, and on himself.

What is man with regard to this infinity about him ? Who can fix his distance or comprehend his proportion ? But to show him another prodigy no less astonishing, let him turn his thoughts on the smallest of those things which fall within his knowledge. Let a mite, for instance, in the contemptible minuteness of its body, present him with parts incomparably more minute ; with jointed legs, with veins in those legs, blood in those veins, humours in that blood, drops in those humours, vapours in those drops. Let him still apply all his force, and strain his utmost conception, to divide the least of those particulars which we have mentioned ; and when he has gone as far

as his mind can reach, let the concluding atom be the subject of our discourse. He will probably suppose that this is the remotest extreme, the last diminutive in nature; but even in this, where he finds himself obliged to stop, I shall undertake still to open before him a new abyss of wonders. Let him conceive me delineating to him on the surface of this imperceptible atom, not only the visible world, but whatsoever he is able to comprehend of the immensity of all things. Let him here behold an infinity of worlds, each with its firmament, its planets, its earth, under the same proportions as in the natural system. Let him still imagine every such earth to be stored with all living things, and even with his mites; and let him consider that it is possible each of these mites may again present him with such a painted world as he admired in the first, and that the show may still be repeated without end and without rest.

Let him again lose himself in these wonders, no less surprising for their minuteness than the former for their vastness and extent. And who will not be confounded to reflect that our body, which before was judged imperceptible in respect of the world, which world is itself imperceptible in the bosom of universal being, should now become a colossus, a world, or rather an universality of being, in respect of that exquisite diminution at which at our last refinement of thought we may by this artifice arrive.

He that shall take this survey of his own nature will,

no doubt, be under the greatest consternation to find himself hanging, as it were, in his material scale, between the two vast abysses of infinite and nothing, from which he is equally removed. He will tremble at the sight of so many prodigies, and, turning his curiosity into admiration, will, I believe, be more inclined silently to contemplate them than presumptuously to search their depths.

For what is man amongst the natures which encompass him? In one view he appears as unity to infinity, in another as all to nothing; and must therefore be the medium between these extremes; alike distant from that nothing whence he was taken, and from that infinity in which he is swallowed up.

His understanding holds the same rank in the order of beings, as his body in the material system; and all the knowledge he can reach is only to discern somewhat of the middle of things, under an eternal despair of comprehending either their beginning or their end. All things arise from nothing, and proceed to infinity. Who can keep pace with these steps? Who can follow such an amazing progress? None but the Author of these wonders is able to explain or understand them.

This middle state and condition is common to all our faculties. Our senses can bear no extremes: too much noise, or too much light, are equally fatal, and make us either deaf or blind; too great distance, or too great nearness, do alike hinder a prospect; too much prolixity, or

too much brevity, darken and perplex a discourse; too intense a pleasure becomes incommodicus; too uniform a symphony has no power to affect and move; our body is utterly indisposed for the last degrees of heat and cold. Qualities in excess are enemies to our nature; we don't properly *feel* but *suffer* them. The weakness of childhood and old age alike incapacitate the mind; too much or too little food disturbs it in its actions; too much or too little study renders it extravagant and unruly. Things in extreme are of no use or account, with respect to our nature; and our nature is of as little with respect to theirs; either we shun and avoid *them*, or they miss and escape *us*.

This is our real estate, and it is this which fixeth and confines all our attainments within certain limits, which we can never pass, being equally unable either to know all things, or to remain ignorant of all things. We are placed here in a vast and uncertain medium, ever floating between ignorance and knowledge, and if we endeavour to step beyond our bounds, the object which we would seize doth, with a violent shock, wrest itself (as it were) from our hold, and vanisheth by an eternal flight, which no force may control or stay.

This is the true condition of nature, and yet the most opposite to our inclination. We are inflamed with a desire of piercing through all things, and of building a tower, the top of which shall reach even to infinity. But our feeble edifice cracks and falls; the earth opens, without bottom, under us, and buries our devices in its gulf.

XXIII.

THE GREATNESS OF MAN.

I CAN easily conceive a man without hands and without feet ; and I could conceive him too without a head, if I did not learn from experience that it is by the help of this he thinks. It is thought, therefore, which constitutes the essence of man, and without which he is altogether unconceivable.

* What is that which has a sense of pleasure in our frame ? Is it our hand, is it our arm, is it the flesh, is it the blood ? Do we not find it absolutely necessary to have recourse to somewhat of an immaterial nature for this service ?

* Man has such a stock of real greatness, that he is great even in knowing himself to be miserable. A tree is no more sensible of misery than of felicity. It is true, the knowing himself to be miserable is an addition to man's misery ; but then it is no less a demonstration of his greatness. Thus his greatness is shown by his miseries, as by its ruins. They are the miseries of a mighty statesman in disgrace, of a prince dispossessed and dethroned. *

* What man ever thought himself unhappy in not being a king, except a deposed king? Did Paulus *Æmilius* apprehend any unhappiness in not being consul? The whole world esteemed him happy in having gone through that office, which in its design and institution was but temporary. But Perseus was looked on as so extremely miserable in not being a king (because, according to the nature of royalty, he should have been ever so), that it was thought strange he should support himself even in life. Who is there that complains of his misfortune in having but one mouth? Who is there that would not reckon himself most unfortunate in having but one eye? No man can bring himself to lament that he has not three eyes; and yet every man is almost inconsolably afflicted with the loss of one.

* We have so great an idea of the human soul in any person, that we cannot bear the thought of wanting its regard and esteem; and it is this united esteem which componeth all the happiness of man.

If the false glory which men pursue is on the one side a proof of their misery, it is on the other side an attestation of their excellence. For whatever degree of riches, health, and other benefits men enjoy, they are still dissatisfied, unless they find themselves in the good opinion of their own kind. Human reason challengeth so much esteem and reverence from us that under the most advantageous circumstances of life we think ourselves unhappy, if we are not placed to an equal advantage in men's judgments. This we look on as

the fairest post that can be attained. Nothing is able to divert us from so passionate a desire; and it is the most indelible character in the heart of man; insomuch that those who think so most contemptuously of mankind as to make the very beasts their equals, do yet contradict their own hypothesis by the motions which they feel in our own souls. Nature, which is stronger than all their reason, convinceth them more powerfully of man's greatness, than reason can persuade them of his meanness.

* Man is a reed, and the weakest reed in nature; but then he is a thinking reed. There is no occasion that the whole universe should arm itself for his defeat; a vapour, a drop of water is sufficient to despatch him. And yet should the world oppress and crush him with ruin, he would still be more noble than that by which he fell, because he would be sensible of his fate, while the universe would be insensible of its victory.

Thus our whole worth and perfection consists in thought. It is hence we are to raise ourselves, and not from the empty ideas of space and duration. Let us study the art of thinking well. This is the rule of life and the fountain of morals.

* It is dangerous to inform man how near he stands to the beasts, without showing him at the same time how infinitely he shines above them. Again, it is dangerous to let him see his excellence, without making him acquainted with his infirmity. And the greatest danger of all is to leave him in utter ignorance of one and of the other. - But

to have a just representation of both is his greatest interest and happiness.

* Let man be allowed to know his own value. Let him love himself because he has a nature capable of good ; but let him not be in love with the weaknesses and diseases of that nature. Let him hate and despise himself because this capacity within him is altogether empty and void ; but let him not hence entertain a dislike of so natural, so noble a capacity. Let him hate his being, and let him love it too ; because he is framed for the possession of truth (and consequently of happiness) and yet can find no truth that is permanent or satisfactory. I would therefore move him to entertain a desire, at least, of finding it, and to yield himself disengaged and ready to follow where he shall find it. And because I am not insensible how much the light of human knowledge is obscured by human passion, I would prescribe to him, above all things, the detestation of his own concupiscence, which is so fatal a bias on his judgment ; so that it may neither blind him while he is making his choice, nor divert or obstruct him from pursuing what he has chosen.

XXIV.

THE VANITY OF MAN.

WE are not satisfied with that life which we possess in ourselves, and in our own proper being ; we are fond of leading an imaginary life in the ideas of others. And it is hence that we are so eager and forward to show ourselves to the world. We labour indefatigably to retain, improve, and adorn this fictitious being, while we stupidly neglect the true. And if we happen to be masters of any noble endowment, of tranquillity, generosity, or fidelity of mind, we press with all our vigour to make them known, that we may transfer and ingraft these excellencies on that fantastic existence. Nay, we had rather part with them, than not apply them to so vain a use ; and would gladly commence cowards to purchase the reputation of valour. A great indication this of the meanness and even nullity of our genuine being, not to rest satisfied in it without its shadow, and very often to renounce the former for the latter ; as he who would not die to preserve his honour, shall become despicably infamous by the refusal.

* There is so much sweetness and so many charms in

glory, that join it to what we will, even to death itself, it fails not to appear beautiful and lovely.

* Our pride is alone a counterpoise to all our miseries ; because it either conceals them, or glories in their discovery.

* Pride has so natural a possession of us, in the midst of our misery and error, that we can lose even our lives with joy, upon the terms of being celebrated for the act.

* Vanity has taken so firm hold in the heart of man, that a porter, a hodman, a turnspit, can talk greatly of himself, and is for having his admirers. Philosophers do but refine upon the same ambition. Those who write of the contempt of glory, do yet desire the glory of writing well ; and those who read their compositions, would not lose the glory of having them read. Perhaps I myself, who am now making these reflections, am now sensible of this glory ; and perhaps my reader is not proof against the charm.

* In spite of all the numerous miseries with which we are encompassed, which seize us, and hold us by the throat, we have still a secret and insuperable instinct which bears us up.

* We are so presumptuous as that we desire to be known to all the world ; and even to those who are not to come into the world until we have left it. And, at the same time, we are so little and vain, as that the esteem of five or six persons about us is enough to content and amuse us.

* The most important thing in life is the choice of a profession ; and yet this is a thing purely in the disposal of chance. It is mere custom which makes upholsterers, masons, soldiers, etc. He's an excellent upholsterer, says one ; and oh, what fools are the red-coats ! Another cries, there is nothing brave and great but the wars ; and all are changelings that don't follow the camp. On the bare strength of hearing some arts commended and others condemned in our infancy, we proceed to choose for ourselves ; for we naturally love what is laudable, and hate what is contemptible. These words never fail to operate upon our minds ; and all the fault is in the application. Some nations consist wholly of mechanics ; in others soldiery is the universal profession. Nature can never be thus uniform. It is custom, therefore, which produceth this effect, and which gains the ascendant over nature. Yet sometimes again nature will prevail, and will keep men under the power of instinct, in spite of all the opposition of custom, whether good or bad.

* Curiosity is little better than mere vanity. For the most part we desire to know things purely that we may talk of them. Few would undertake so dangerous voyages and travels for the bare pleasure of entertaining their sight, if they were bound to secrecy at their return, or for ever cloistered from conversation.

* We never think of raising a name and repute in places through which we only pass ; but where we fix our residence for any time, there we eagerly admit and industriously

pursue this thought. What time is requisite for the purpose? such as bears a proportion to our short and miserable life.

* A little matter comforts us, because a less is able to grieve and afflict us.

* We can never keep close to the present. We anticipate the time to come, as too slow, in order to the making it mend its pace; or we call back the time that is past, as too swift, in order to the stopping its flight. Such is our folly, that we ramble through those times in which we have no concern, and utterly forget that on which our whole fortune and interest depends; such our vanity, that we dream of those which are not, and let that which alone subsists pass by us without notice or reflection. The reason of all which is this: because the present generally gives us some uneasiness, we are willing to hide it from our sight as being grievous to us; but if it happen to be agreeable, we are in no less pain to see it slide so fast away. Hence we tack the future to it, to strengthen and support it, and pretehd to dispose of things not in our power for a time at which we have no assurance ever to arrive.

Let a man examine his own thoughts, and he will always find them employed about the time past, or to come. We scarce bestow a glance upon the present, or, if we do, it is only that we may borrow light from hence to manage and direct the future. The present is never the mark of our designs. We use both past and present as our means and

instruments, but the future only as our object and aim: Thus we never live, but we ever hope to live; and under this continual disposition and preparation to happiness, it is certain we can never be actually happy, if our hopes are terminated with the scene of this life.

* Our fancy so much enlargeth and swells this temporal duration by reflecting perpetually on it, and so far extenuates and contracts our eternal state by seldom taking it into thought, that we make a nothing of eternity, and an eternity of nothing. And the springs of this whole proceeding are so vigorous in us that all our reason is too weak to suppress or overrule them.

* Cromwell seemed to have laid a fair train for the ruin of all Christendom. The royal family had been destroyed, and his own confirmed for ever in their usurpation, but for the little gravel stone which fell down into his ureter. Rome itself began to tremble under him. But this petty grain, which elsewhere had been contemptible, lighting on such a part, occasioned the death of the usurper, the fall of his family, and the restoration of the king.

XXV.

THE WEAKNESS OF MAN.

THERE is nothing which more astonishes me than that the whole world should not be astonished at their own infirmity. Men proceed seriously to action, and every one follows the way of life he has embraced, not as if it were really good in being the mode, but as if each man were exactly acquainted with the measures of reason and justice.

We are disappointed every moment, and by a very pleasant humility we imagine that the fault is in ourselves, and not in the art which we all profess to understand. It is fit there should be many persons of this complexion in the world, to demonstrate that man is capable of the most extravagant opinions, because he is capable of believing that the weakness he feels is not general and inevitable, but that he is naturally endued with true judgment and infallible wisdom.

* The weakness of human reason appears more evidently in those who are insensible of it, than in such as know and confess it.

* While we are too young, our judgment is in immaturity ;

and when we are too old, it is in decay. If we think too little of a thing, or too much, our head turns giddy, and we are at a loss to find out our way to truth.

He that views his own work, just as it comes out of his hands, is too much prepossessed in its favour; and he that lets it lie too long unsurveyed, forgets the niceness of its contexture and the model by which it was wrought.

There is but one precise point which is the true place of showing a picture; all others are either too near or too distant, or too high, or too low. Perspective assigns this point in the art of painting; but who has skill enough to fix it in truth and morals?

* That mistress of mistake, which we call fancy or opinion, is therefore the greater cheat, because she does not cheat constantly and by rule. Always to lie, would be always to tell the truth; whereas being deceitful only for the most part, she gives us no marks of her character, but stamps truth and falsehood with the very same impression.

This proud princess and potentate, the sworn enemy of reason, so ambitious to rule and domineer, has, that she may show her absolute power over the world, established in man a second nature. She has her rich and her poor, her happy and her miserable, her sick and her sound, her fools and her wise; and nothing grieves us so much as to see that she fills her votaries with a satis action more large and entire than reason pretends to give. The imaginary wise men feel another sort of complacency

within themselves than the masters of true wisdom can regularly find. Those look on the world with an air of authority, and discourse with assurance and confidence, while these never express themselves without diffidence and concern. And that gaiety of countenance often gives the former such an advantage in the minds of their hearers that when they meet with judges of their own standard, they seldom fail to please. Opinion cannot, indeed, make a fool wise, but it makes him contented, and so triumphs over reason, which seems only to render its friends and followers more sensibly miserable. This punisheth us with infamy, while that rewards us with glory.

What dispenses reputation, what procures veneration and regard to persons and things, but opinion? How insufficient are all the treasures of the world to delight or satisfy without its approbation and consent?

Opinion is the universal disposer of things; this makes beauty, and justice, and happiness; and these make all that is excellent upon earth. I would gladly see an Italian piece of which I know only the title, but such a title as is worth many whole books; it is "Della Opinione Regina del Mundo": Of Opinion, the Queen of the World. If it has nothing in it worse than this title, I subscribe to it heartily, unseen.

There is scarce anything, just or unjust, which does not change its nature upon changing its climate. Three degrees of elevation in the pole may ruin the whole profession of

law. A meridian on the globe, or a few years' prepossession, decides the most important truths. Maxims and first principles are subject to revolutions and we are to go to chronology for the epochas of right and wrong. A very humoursome justice this, which is bounded by a river or a mountain : Orthodoxy on one side of the Pyrenees may be Heresy on the other.

* The art of overturning kingdoms is to reverse established customs, by searching them to the quick, and then censuring them as originally defective in authority and justice. We ought (say these critics in policy) to go back to the primitive and fundamental laws, which unrighteous custom has destroyed. When men are at this play, the state is sure to lose all. Nothing can keep its weight in so false a balance. Yet the multitude lend a willing ear to such discourses ; they are glad to shake off the yoke, and the great ones raise themselves not only upon their ruin, but upon the ruin of those curious refiners who were the first engines of the mischief. But then there is another fault quite opposite to this, when we think everything to be done with justice, that is not done without example.

* Set the greatest philosopher in the world upon a plank, but somewhat broader than the space which he usually takes up in walking, and let there be a precipice underneath, his reason may demonstrate him to be safe, but his fancy will deny the argument. This is a venture,

the very thought of which few can bear without sweating or turning pale. I need not run through all instances of the same kind. Every one knows the sight of a cat or rat, or the crashing of a coal, will throw some persons into a fit, and put their reason quite beside its guard !

* Look upon that venerable magistrate, whose age and ability commands the reverence of the whole nation. Would you not suppose that he governs himself by the purest and sublimest wisdom, and judgeth of things according to their real nature, without being moved by those trifling accidents and circumstances, which disorder only weak and little people? But behold him entering the court; see him placed on the bench, and prepared with exemplary gravity for a formal hearing: let one of the council have an untunable voice, or a singular aspect, let him have been ill-treated by his barber, or disengaged by the roads and weather, and I will wager against the countenance of your chief justice.

* The soul of the greatest man living is not so free and independent, but that it is subject to disturbance at the least noise about him. You need not let off a cannon to break his train of thought; the creaking of a weather-cock, or of a pulley, will do it effectually. Do not be surprised that you hear him argue a little incoherently at present. He has a fly buzzing at his ears, and that is enough to make him a stranger to good counsel. Would you have him rightly apprised of the truth, you must take

off this untoward animal, which holds his reason at bay, and discomposeth that sovereign understanding which gives laws to towns and kingdoms.

* Diseases are another principle of error. They impair our judgment and our senses. And if those which are most violent produce a very visible change, those which have less strength do yet leave a proportionable impression.

Again, interest must be acknowledged to have a singular art in agreeably putting out our eyes. Affection or dislike quite invert the rules of justice. A counsellor retained with a large fee grows clear-sighted to admiration, and finds the cause immediately improve upon his hands. Yet I have known the men, who through a contrary fantasticalness of spirit have, to avoid these partial and selfish regards, been drawn into the highest injustice by a most unreasonable counterpoise. The sure way to ruin the fairest concern depending before them, was to get recommended by some of their nearest relations.

* Truth and justice are things so nice and subtle, that our instruments are not fine enough to touch or take hold of them with any exactness. In both cases they either miss the point utterly, or fall foul upon it, and then settle at a venture, seldom so near to the right as to the wrong.

* A veneration for antiquity does not only abuse and enslave our mind; the charms of novelty have the same

ascendant over us. And hence arise all the disputes amongst men, who charge each other either with sticking to the false impressions of their childhood, or with running at all adventures into every new hypothesis and fancy.

Who is the man that keeps the just medium between these extremes? Let him appear and make good his pretensions. There is no principle, how natural soever it may seem, and though even sucked in with our first milk, but may be made to pass for a false impression, either of education or of sense; because, says one, you have been wont ever since your infancy to suppose a vessel empty when you saw nothing in it, hence you come to believe the possibility of a vacuum. Why, this is only a strong delusion of your senses, strengthened by custom, which science and demonstration ought to correct. By your leave, says the other, you have been positively told in the schools that a vacuum was impossible, and thus your senses were corrupted, which easily and naturally allowed it before this ill impression. This, therefore, you ought to deface by returning to your primitive nature. And now we have heard both sides, where shall we fix the cheat, in our senses, or in our education?

* The whole employment of men's lives is to improve their fortunes; and yet the title by which they hold all, if traced to its origin, is no more than the pure fancy of the legislators; but their possession is still more precarious than their right, and at the mercy of a thousand accidents. Nor

are the treasures of the mind better ensured, while a fall or a fit of sickness may bankrupt the ablest understanding.

* So that, abstracting from a state of grace, man is nothing but the continual subject of indelible and insuperable errors. He can purchase no certain information ; everything in the world abuseth his curiosity. His two criterions of truth, reason and sense—besides that they are not always faithful to themselves—are wont reciprocally to mock and delude each other. Our senses beguile our reason with false appearances ; and our reason has likewise its false consequences, wherewith to return and revenge the cheat. The passions discompose the senses, and strike upon them the wrong way. They lie, and forge, and misrepresent, with a sort of vicious emulation.

* What are all our natural principles but principles of custom, derived from parents to children, as fear and flight to the beasts of game ?

A different custom will produce a different natural principle. This experience testifies ; and if there are some dictates of nature impregnable against custom, there are likewise some impressions of custom which nature cannot overrule. This depends wholly on the temper and constitution of particular men.

Parents discover a jealousy lest the natural duty and affection of their children should be defaced. What a sort of nature is this, which we suppose capable of defacement ?

We must at least allow custom to be another nature which can thus destroy the former ; and where is the impropriety in styling custom natural ? or why may not nature itself be conceived as a primary custom, no less than custom as a secondary nature ?

XXVI.

THE MISERY OF MAN.

THERE is nothing more capable of letting us into the knowledge of human misery than an inquiry after the real cause of that perpetual hurry and confusion in which we pass our lives.

The soul is sent into the body to be a sojourner of a few days. She knows that this is but a stop till she may embark for eternity ; and that a small space is allowed her to prepare for the voyage. The main part of this space is ravished from her by the necessities of nature ; and but a slender pittance left to her own disposal. And yet this moment which remains does so strangely oppress and perplex her, that she only studies how to lose it. She feels an intolerable burthen in being obliged to live with herself, and think of herself ; and therefore, her principal care is to forget herself, and to let this short and precious moment pass away without reflection, by amusing herself with things which prevent her notice of its speed.

This is the ground of all the tumultuary business, of all the trifling diversions amongst men ; in which our general

aim is to make the time pass off our hands without feeling it, or rather without feeling ourselves ; and, by getting rid of this small portion of life, to avoid that inward disgust and bitterness which we should not fail to meet with if we found leisure to descend into our own breasts. For it is undeniably certain that the soul of man is here incapable of rest and satisfaction. And this obliges her to expand herself every way, and to seek how she may lose the thoughts of her own proper being in a settled application to the things about her. Her very happiness consists in this forgetfulness ; and to make her exquisitely miserable, nothing more is required but the engaging her to look into herself, and to dwell at home.

We charge persons from their very infancy with the care of their own fortunes and honours, and no less of their estates and dignities belonging to their kindred and friends. We burthen them with the study of languages, of exercises, and of arts. We enter them in business, and persuade them that they can never be truly blessed unless by their industry and caution they in some measure secure the interest and glory of themselves, their families and their dependents ; and that unavoidable unhappiness is entailed upon the failure of any one particular in this kind. Thus we teach them to wear out their strength, and to rob themselves of their rest. A strange method (you will say) of making them happy ! What could be done with more effect towards the ensuring them in misery ? Would you know what ? Why, only to release them from these cares,

and to take off these burthens. For then their eyes and their thoughts must be turned inward, and that is the only hardship which they esteem insupportable. Hence, if they gain any relaxation from their labours, we find them eager to throw it away upon some sport or diversion which takes up their whole activity, and pleasantly robs them of themselves.

It is for this reason that when I have set myself to consider the various agitations of human life, the toil and danger to which we expose ourselves in the court, in the camp, in the pursuits of ambition, which give birth to so much passion and contention, to so many desperate and fatal adventures, I have often said that the universal cause of men's misfortunes was their not being able to live quietly in a chamber. A person who has enough for the uses of this world, did he know the art of dwelling with himself, would never quit that repose and security for a voyage or a siege ; nor would take so much pains to hazard his life, had he no other aim than barely to live.

But upon stricter examination I found that this aversion to home, this roving and restless disposition, proceeded from a cause no less powerful than universal ; from the native unhappiness of our frail and mortal state, which is incapable of all comfort, if we have nothing to divert our thoughts, and to call us out of ourselves.

I speak of those alone who survey their own nature, without the views of faith and religion. It is indeed one of the miracles of Christianity, that by reconciling man to

God, it restores him to his own good opinion ; that it makes him able to bear the sight of himself ; and in some cases renders solitude and silence more agreeable than all the intercourse and action of mankind. Nor is it by fixing man in his own person that it produceth these wonderful effects ; it is by carrying him to God, and by supporting him under the sense of his miseries with the hopes of an assured and complete deliverance in a better life.

But for those who do not act above the principles of mere nature, it is impossible they should, without falling into an incurable chagrin and discontent, undergo the lingering torment of leisure. Man who loves nothing but his own person, hates nothing so much as to be confined to his own conversation. He seeks nothing but himself, and yet flies and avoids nothing more than himself ; because when he is obliged to look within, he does not see himself such as he could wish ; discovering only a hidden store of inevitable miseries, and a mighty void of all real and solid good which it is beyond his ability to replenish.

Let a man choose his own condition, let him embellish it with all the goods and all the satisfactions he can possess or desire ; yet, if in the midst of this glory and pride he is without business, and without diversion, and has time to contemplate on his fortunes, his spirits must unavoidably sink beneath the languishing felicity. He will of necessity torment himself with the prospect of what is to come ; and he that boasted to have brought home all the ingredients of

happiness, must again be sent abroad, or condemned to domestic misery.

Is majesty itself so truly great and sufficient as to support those whom it adorns and encircles, under the bare thought of their own grandeur? Is it necessary that this thought should be here likewise diverted as in the common herd of men? A vulgar person will be abundantly happy if he may ease himself of his secret troubles, by applying all his care to excel in the perfection of dancing. But dare we say this of a king? Or will he be more charmed with so vain and petty amusements than with the contemplation of his royal dignity and estate? What nobler, what more sublime object than himself to engage and to satisfy his spirit? Might it not seem an envious lessening of his content to interrupt his princely thought with the care of measuring his steps by an air of music, or of exactly ordering a ball, instead of leaving him to survey the glories of his throne, and to rejoice in the excellence of his power? Let us presume to make the experiment. Let us suppose a prince in solitude without any entertainment of sense, any engagement of mind, any relief of conversation; and we shall find that a prince with his eyes upon himself is a man full of miseries, and who feels them with as quick and piercing a resentment as the lowest among his slaves. And therefore, it has been a standing maxim to banish these intruding and importunate reflections from court, and to keep about the royal person those who shall constantly

purvey for the amusement of their master, by laying a train of diversions to succeed after business, and by watching his hours of leisure, to pour in immediately a fresh supply of mirth and sport, that no vacancy may be left in life ; that is, the court abounds with men who have a wonderful activity in taking care that His Majesty shall not be alone, well knowing that solitude is but another name for misery, and that the supreme pitch of worldly greatness is too nice and weak to bear the examination of a thought.

The principal thing which supports men under great employments, otherwise so full of toil and trouble, is that by this means they are called off from the penance of self-reflection.

For pray consider, what is it else to be a superintendent, a chancellor, a prime-president, but to have a number of persons flocking about them from all sides, who shall secure them, every hour in the day, from giving audience to their own mind ? If they chance to fall into disgrace, and to be banished to their country seat, though they want neither fortune nor retinue, yet they seldom fail to commence unhappy ; because they are no longer entertained with such a variety of new faces, and a succession of new business, as may make anything rather than themselves the subject of their meditation.

Whence comes it to pass that men are transported to such a degree with gaming, hunting, or other diversions, which seem to have taken an absolute possession of their

souls? Not because there is any real and intrinsic good to be obtained by these pursuits ; not because they imagine that true happiness is to be found in the money which they win at play, or in the beast which they run down in the chase. For should you present them beforehand with both these, to save their trouble, they would be unanimous in rejecting the proposal. It is not the gentle and easy part which they are fond of, such as may give them leisure and space for thought ; but it is the heat and the hurry, which divert them from the mortification of thinking.

On this account it is that men are so much in love with the noise and tumult of the world, that a prison is a seat of horror, and that few persons can bear the punishment of being confined to themselves.

We have seen the utmost that human invention can do in projecting for human happiness. Those who content themselves barely with demonstrating the vanity and littleness of common diversions are indeed acquainted with one part of our miseries ; for a considerable part it is to be thus capable of taking pleasure in things so base and insignificant. But they apprehend not the cause and principle which renders these miseries even necessary to us, so long as we remain uncured of that inward and natural infirmity of not being able to bear the sight of our own condition. The hare which men buy in the market cannot screen them from this view ; but the field and the chase afford an approved relief. And, therefore, when we reproach them with their low and ignoble aim,

and observe to them how little satisfaction there is in that which they follow with so much contention and ardour, did they answer upon mature judgment, they would acknowledge the equity of our censure, and would ingenuously declare that they proposed nothing in these pursuits but the bare violence of the motion, such as might keep them strangers to the secrets of their soul; and that therefore they made choice of objects which, how worthless soever in reality, yet were of an engaging and attractive nature, and able to engross the activity of all their powers. And the reason why they do not answer in this manner is the want of this acquaintance with their own bosom. A gentleman believes with all sincerity that there is somewhat great and noble in hunting, and will be sure to tell you that it is a royal sport. You may hear the like defence and encomium of any other exercise or employment which men affect or pursue. They imagine that there must needs be somewhat real and solid in the objects themselves. They are persuaded that could they but gain such a point they should then repose themselves with content and pleasure; and are under an insensibility of the insatiable nature of this desire. They believe themselves to be heartily engaged in the attainment of rest, while they are indeed employed in nothing else but the search of continual and successive drudgery.

Men have a secret instinct prompting them to seek employment or recreation, which proceeds from no other

cause but the sense of their inward pain and never-ceasing torment. They have another secret instinct, a relic of their primitive nature, which assures them that the sum of their happiness consists in ease and repose. And upon these two opposite instincts they form one confused design, lurking in the recesses of their soul, which engages them to prosecute the latter by the intervention of the former, and constantly to persuade themselves that the satisfaction they have hitherto wanted will infallibly attend them if, by surmounting certain difficulties which they now look in the face, they may open a safe passage to peace and tranquillity.

Thus our life runs out. We seek rest, by encountering such particular impediments, which if we are able to remove, the consequence is that the rest which we have obtained becomes itself a grievance. For we are ruminating every moment, either on the miseries we feel, or on those we fear. And even when we seem on all sides to be placed under shelter, the affections which are so naturally rooted in us fail not to regret their lost dominion, and to diffuse their melancholic poison through the soul.

And therefore, when Cineas so gravely admonished Pyrrhus (who proposed to enjoy himself with his friends, after he should have conquered a good part of the world) that he would do much better to anticipate his own happiness, by taking immediate possession of this ease and quiet, without pursuing it through so much fatigue, the counsel he gave was indeed full of difficulty, and scarce

more rational than the project of that young ambitious prince. Both the one and the other opinion supposed that which is false: that a man can rest satisfied with himself, and his present possessions, without filling up the void space in his heart with imaginary expectations. Pyrrhus must inevitably have been unhappy, either without or with the conquest of the world; and perhaps that soft and peaceful life which his minister advised him to embrace, was less capable of giving him satisfaction than the heat and tumult of so many expeditions and so many battles which he was then forming and fighting in his mind.

Man therefore must be confessed to be so very unfortunate, as that without any external cause of trouble he would ever regret and bemoan the very condition of his own nature, and yet to be at the same time so very fantastical, as that while he is full of a thousand inward and essential subjects of grief, the least outward trifle is sufficient to divert him. Insomuch that upon impartial consideration, his case seems more to be lamented in that he is capable of receiving pleasure from things so low and frivolous, than in that he is so immoderately afflicted with his own real miseries, and his diversion appears infinitely less reasonable than his disquiet.

* Whence is it, think ye, that this gentleman, who has lately buried his only son, and who this very morning was so full of law and lamentation, at present seems to have quite forgotten his part? Do not be surprised; the business

is, that our friend is wholly taken up with looking what way the stag will turn, which his dogs have been in chase of some hours. Such an accident is enough to put a man beside his chagrin, though groaning under the heaviest calamity of life. As long as you can engage him in some diversion, so long you make him happy ; but it is with a false and imaginary happiness, not arising from the possession of any real and solid good, but from a levity of spirit by which he loses the memory of his substantial woes, amidst the entertainments of mean and ridiculous objects unworthy of his application, more unworthy of his love. It is the joy of a man in a fever, or a frenzy, resulting not from the regular motion, but from the distemper and discomposure of his mind. It is a mere sport of folly and delusion. Nor is there anything more surprising in human life, than to observe the insignificancy of those things which divert and please us. It is true, by thus keeping our mind always employed, they shield it from the consideration of real evils ; but then they make it utterly cheat itself, by doting on a fantastic object of delight.

What do you take to be the aim and motive of those youths, whom you see engaged at tennis with such force of body and application of mind ? Why, the pleasure of boasting to-morrow that they won so many sets of such a notable gamester. This is the real spring of so much action and toil. And it is but the very same which disposes others to drudge and sweat in their closets, for the sake of informing the learned world that they have resolved a question in

algebra hitherto reputed inexplicable. Many thousands more expose themselves to the greatest of dangers for the glory of taking a town ; in my judgment, no less ridiculously. To conclude. There are not wanting those who kill themselves purely with reading and observing all this application of others ; not that they may grow wiser by it, but that they may have the credit of apprehending its vanity. And these last are the most exquisitely foolish, because they are so willingly and wittingly ; whereas it is reasonable to suppose of the rest, that were they alike sensible of their folly, they would want no admonition to desert it.

* A man, that by gaming every day for some little stake, passeth away his life without uneasiness or melancholy, would yet be rendered unhappy should you give him every morning the sum which he could possibly win all day, upon condition to forbear. It will be said, perhaps, that it is the amusement of the play which he seeks, and not the gain. Yet if he plays for nothing his gaiety is over, and the spleen recovers full possession. Bare amusement, therefore, is not what he proposeth ; a languishing amusement without heat or passion would but dispirit and fatigue him ; he must be allowed to raise and chaff himself by proposing a happiness in the gaining of that which he would despise if given him not to venture, and by creating a fictitious object, which shall excite and employ his desire, his anger, his hope, and his fear.

So that these diversions of men, which are found to

constitute their happiness, are not only mean and vile, but they are false and deceitful ; that is, we are in love with mere airy shapes and phantoms, such as must be incapable of possessing the heart of man, had he not lost the taste and perception of real good, and were he not filled with baseness, and levity, and pride, together with an infinite number of other vices, such as can no way relieve us under our present miseries, but by creating others, which are still more dangerous, in being more substantial. For these are the things which chiefly bar us from our own thoughts, and which teach us to give new wings to our time, and yet to remain insensible of its flight. Without these we should indeed be under a continued weariness and perplexity, yet such as might prompt us to seek out a better method for its cure. Whereas these, which we call our diversions, do but amuse and beguile us ; and, in conclusion, lead us down blindfold into our grave.

Mankind, having no infallible remedy against ignorance, misery, and death, imagine that some respite, some shelter, may at least be found by agreeing to banish them from their meditation. This is the only comfort they have been able to invent under their numerous calamities. But a most miserable comfort it proves, because it does not tend to the removal of these evils, but only to the concealment of them for a short season ; and because, in thus concealing them, it hinders us from applying such means as should remove them. Thus, by a strange revolution in the nature of man, that grief and inward disquiet, which he dreads as the

greatest of sensible evils, is in one respect his greatest good, because it might contribute more than all things besides to the putting him in a successful method of recovery. On the other hand his recreation, which he seems to prize as his sovereign good, is indeed his greatest evil, because it is of all things the most effectual in making him negligent under his distemper. And both the one and the other are admirable proofs, as of man's misery and corruption, so of his greatness and dignity. For the reason why he grows sick and weary of every object, and engages in such a multitude of pursuits, is because he still retains the idea of his lost happiness ; which not finding within himself, he seeks it through the whole circle of external things ; but always seeks without success, because it is indeed to be found not in ourselves, nor in the creatures, but in God alone.

XXVII.

THOUGHTS UPON MIRACLES.

WE are to judge of doctrines by miracles, and of miracles by doctrines. They are the test and standard of each other, yet without the least repugnancy or difficulty.

* Some miracles are certain and infallible evidences of truth, others are not. We ought to have a settled rule whereby to distinguish them, or they must prove wholly useless to us. But they are so far from being of no use, as to be of absolute and fundamental necessity.

Our rule therefore must be such as shall not impair the strength afforded by true miracles to the true religion, which is the principal end of miracles.

* Were there no miracles ever joined to falsehood and error, they would be immediately convictive, without search or trial. But, as the case is otherwise, had we no rule to search and try them by, they would be utterly ineffectual, and we should lose the chief ground and motive of our faith.

Moses has established one rule, when the miracle

performed shall lead men to idolatry;¹ and our Lord has established another:² there is no man, says He, which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. Whence it follows, that whoever declares openly against Jesus Christ cannot perform miracles in His name, and miracles not performed in the name of Christ are to be rejected without credit or dependence. We see then the two only just exceptions against miracles; that in the Old Testament, when they turn us from God; and that in the New, when they turn us from Jesus Christ.

So that immediately upon the sight of a miracle, we ought either to yield and submit to it, or to have some very extraordinary token in bar to its pretensions; that is, we ought to be certain whether the person who performs it denies the only true God, or our Lord Jesus Christ.

* Every religion is false which, as to its faith, does not prescribe the worship of one God, as the great author and fountain of all things; and which, as to its morals, does not prescribe the love of one God as the great object and end of all things.

Every religion, at this day, which does not acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ is notoriously false, and even miracles are insufficient for its attestation.

* The Jews had a doctrine delivered by God, as we have a doctrine delivered by Jesus Christ; and in like manner, confirmed by miracles. They had also an express prohibition against crediting those who should even work

¹ Deut. xii. 1, 2, 3.

² Mark ix. 38.

miracles in confirmation of a contrary doctrine, together with an order to apply themselves to the chief priests, to be concluded by their judgment. So that whatsoever reasons we have at present to refuse our assent to the workers of miracles, the same they may seem to have had, with regard to our Lord and His Apostles.

And yet most certain it is, that they were highly culpable in this respect; for our Lord Himself declares that His miracles rendered them without excuse. "Si opera non fecisset in eis quæ nemo aliis fecit, peccatum non haberent" (If I had not done amongst them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin)¹.

The consequence is, that He judged His miracles to be infallible evidences of His doctrine, and the Jews to be under a necessary obligation of believing Him. And, indeed, His miracles especially rendered the incredulity of the Jews wilful and criminal. For the testimonies drawn purely from Scripture did not, before our Lord's death, amount to a demonstration. For instance, Moses had said, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise ye up," etc., but this did by no means evince Jesus Christ to be that prophet, and therefore left the main question undecided; yet this, with other the like passages, was sufficient to raise a presumption that He might possibly be the Messias, or that prophet, which presumption, with the reinforcement of His miracles, ought to have confirmed the Jews in an opinion that He was really so.

¹ John xv. 24.

The prophecies alone did not point out our Lord with the utmost certainty during His life. So that, during this space, if His miracles had not been decisive proofs, a man would have been excusable in disbelieving Him. It is clear, then, that miracles performed are a sufficient evidence, when we have no contrary argument from doctrines delivered ; and that they ought, in this case, to be relied upon with assurance and satisfaction.

It was from our Lord's miracles that Nicodemus concluded the divinity of His doctrine : “ *Scimus quia a Deo venisti magister ; nemo enim potest haec signa facere quæ tu facis, nisi fuerit Deus cum eo.* ”¹ He did not judge of the miracles by the doctrine ; but of the doctrine by the miracles.

If, therefore, a doctrine should even be suspicious (as that of our Lord might possibly be to Nicodemus, because it seemed to destroy the traditions of the Pharisees), yet if there are plain and undeniable miracles on the same side, the authority of a miracle ought to overbalance any difficulty that can arise from a doctrine. The reason of which is founded upon this immovable principle, that God cannot lead men into error.

There seems to be a reciprocal right (if we may so speak) between God and man. “ Come now and let us reason together,” says God by Isaiah ;² and again by the same prophet, “ What could I have done more to my vineyard that I have not done to it ? ”³

¹ John iii. 2.

² Isai. i. 18.

³ Isai. v. 4.

God has this right with regard to men, that they should embrace the religion which He is pleased to send them. And men, by the divine favour, seem to have this right in respect of God, that He should not lead them into error.

But now they would unavoidably be led into error, if a worker of miracles should publish a false doctrine, unless either the doctrine itself visibly appeared to be false, or unless a worker of much greater miracles had given them an express caution against these which should follow.

Let us put the case of a division in the Church ; and let us suppose the Arians (who pretended to build upon the authority of Scripture no less than the Catholics) to have performed miracles, and the Catholics none. Here men must have laid under a necessity of being deceived ; for as a man who shall pretend to reveal to us the mysteries of God is not worthy to be credited on his own private testimony, so a man who, to justify his divine commission, shall raise the dead, foretell future events, remove mountains, or expel diseases by human means incurable, merits such a credit as cannot without the guilt of impiety be denied him, provided that he be not convicted of falsehood by some other person, who shall perform still greater miracles.

But is not God said to tempt and prove us, and may He not tempt us by miracles wrought in the defence of error ?

I answer, to tempt and to lead into error are very different things. The former is consistent with the divine perfections ; the latter not. To tempt is only to present

the occasion, which imposes no necessity on our belief. To lead into error is to put a man under a necessity of embracing that which is false. This is what God cannot do, and yet what must be done by Him, should He, while the question of doctrine remains obscure, lend a miracle to strengthen the wrong side.

Hence we may conclude it to be impossible that a person who conceals the false part of his doctrine, and publishes that only which is true, pretending an exact conformity to God and the Church, should work a miracle in order to the passing his erroneous opinions insensibly upon the world. And more impossible it is that God, who knows the heart, should vouchsafe the power of miracles to such a deceiver.

* There is a wide distance between the not being for our Lord Jesus Christ, and the pretending to be so. Some persons of the former character may possibly be permitted to work miracles, but none of the latter; because it is plain of those, that they work them against the truth, but not of these; and consequently the miracles of the former are more clearly discerned, and more easily condemned.

Miracles, therefore, are a standing test of all things which admit of doubt, between pagans and Jews, Jews and Christians, heretics and Catholics, between the three Crosses, between the accuser and the accused.

This is what has been seen and exemplified in all the combats of the champions of truth against those of error; of Abel against Cain; of Moses against the magicians; of

Elias against the false prophets ; of our Lord against the Pharisees ; of St. Paul against Bar-Jesus ; of the Apostles against the exorcists ; of Christians against infidels ; of Catholics against heretics. And this is what shall be seen in the final contention of Elias and Enoch against Anti-christ. In the trial by miracle truth will always prevail.

To conclude : through the whole process of the cause of God, and of the true religion, no one miracle has been performed on the side of error, but what has been vastly overbalanced by much greater miracles on the side of truth.

Wherefore this rule evinceth the obligation which the Jews had to believe in Jesus Christ. Our Lord's person was indeed suspected by them ; but then the power of His miracles was infinitely more apparent than the suspicions against His person.

* In the history of our Lord, when many believed on Him, having seen the miracles which He did, we find others disbelieving Him on account of the prophecies which specified Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messias ; whereas they supposed our Lord to have been born in Nazareth. But here they ought to have inquired more diligently whether He who performed these mighty works was not indeed born in Bethlehem ; for His miracles being convictive, this pretended opposition of His doctrine to the Scriptures, and this obscurity as to His original, might contribute to their blindness, but cannot be alleged in their excuse.

* Our Lord, by curing him that was born blind, and performing other miracles on the Sabbath day, strengthened the infatuation of the Pharisees, who pretended to judge of His miracles by His doctrine.

But by the rule which obligeth us to the belief of Jesus Christ, by the same we are obliged not to believe Antichrist.

Jesus Christ spake neither against Moses nor against God. Antichrist and the false prophets, which are foretold both in the Old and New Testament, shall speak openly against God, and against Jesus Christ. God will never permit those who are even secretly His enemies to perform miracles openly in His name.

* Moses prophesied of Jesus Christ, and commanded that He should be heard and obeyed. Jesus Christ has prophesied of Antichrist, and forbidden us to follow or regard him.

The miracles of Jesus Christ were not foretold by Antichrist, but the miracles of Antichrist are foretold by Jesus Christ. Wherefore, if Jesus Christ had not been the Messias, He had properly led men into error; into which no man can with reason be led by the miracles of Antichrist. And hence the miracles of the latter cannot, in the least, prejudice the miracles of the former; as none will say that our Lord, when He warned us against those of Antichrist, did conceive that He should hereby impair the authority of His own.

* We can have no possible reason to believe in Anti-

christ which we have not to believe in Jesus ; but we have infinite reasons to believe in Jesus which we cannot possibly have to believe in Antichrist.

* As miracles were the instruments of founding and establishing the Church, so shall they be the instruments of preserving it to the coming of Antichrist, and the consummation of all things.

Wherefore God, to secure this evidence to His Church, has either confounded all false miracles, or has foretold them as such ; and, as well by one means as the other, has not only raised Himself above that which is supernatural in respect of us, but in some sort has raised us up above it too.

For miracles are of so prodigious a force and influence that notwithstanding all the conviction which we have of the divine existence and perfections, it is still necessary that God should warn us not to credit them when they make against Himself ; without which caution they might be able to perplex and mislead us.

So that the several passages in Deuteronomy xiii. prohibiting all belief or attention to those who should work miracles, in order to pervert men from the worship of the true God ; as also that caution in St. Mark,¹ "There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, who shall do many notable signs, so as to seduce, if possible, the very elect," with many texts of the like import, are so far from lessening the authority of true miracles, that they are the highest confirmation of their force and efficacy.

¹ Mark xiii. 22.

* The ground of disbelieving true miracles is the want of charity. "Ye believe not," says our Lord to the Jews, "because ye are not of my sheep."¹ The ground of believing false miracles is the want of the same charity. "Eo quid charitatem veritatis non receperunt, ut salvi fierent, ideo mittet illis Deus operationem erroris, ut credant mendacio."²

* When I am considering what may be the reason that men afford credit to so many cheats in physic, and even put their lives into their hands, it appears to me to be no other than this, that there are such things in the world as true and real medicines; because otherwise it would be impossible that these which are false and feigned should so much abound or be so much depended on. For were there no such things, and were all distempers indeed incurable, either no person would be so extravagant as to think himself master of these remedies, or much less would so many others be deluded by his pretensions. As if a man should give out that he has an infallible antidote against dying; it is not likely his practice should grow considerable till he could produce a visible instance of its success. But inasmuch as there is certainly a great number of remedies which have been approved by the knowledge and experience of the wisest men, this gives a ply to human belief; and because the thing cannot be denied in general, on account of particular effects, the multitude being unable to distinguish which of these

¹ John x. 26.

² Thess. ii. 10.

particular effects are true, swallows them all in gross. As the reason why men ascribe so many false effects to the moon, is because she has indeed some real influences, as in the ebbing and flowing of the sea.

In the same manner, and with the like evidence, I conclude that there could never have been so many pretended miracles, revelations, lots, etc., but on account of others which were real; nor so many false religions, but with regard to one which is the true. For were there nothing in this whole matter, it had been impossible for some to have entertained such conceits, and more impossible for others to credit what these should have conceived. But because there had been very signal events of the like nature, which were undoubtedly genuine, and acknowledged as such by the wisest and greatest amongst men, it was this impression which rendered the whole world so capable of admitting those that were spurious. And, therefore, instead of arguing from the false miracles against the true, we ought, on the contrary, to infer these from those, and to assure ourselves that forgery and falsehood are the shadows which have ever followed truth and reality. And all this depends upon one natural principle, that the soul of man having been once brought to such a tendency and inclination by that which is just and solid, becomes ever after susceptible of what is specious and counterfeit.

* We are commanded to hear the Church, but not to hearken to miracles; because the latter action is natural,

and therefore wanted not an additional precept, which the former, being more arbitrary, seemed to require.

* There are so very few to whom God makes Himself known by these amazing strokes of His power, that men are in the highest manner obliged to make use of so extraordinary occasions. For the reason why He is pleased thus to come out of the awful retirements of His nature is only that He may increase our faith, and may engage us to serve Him still with the more ardour as we know Him with the more certainty.

* Should God continually reveal Himself to men by visible discoveries, faith would cease to be a virtue ; and should He afford them no such discoveries, it would almost cease to be. And therefore we find that as for the most part He dwells in secret, so He discloses Himself on some rare occasions when He would more strictly engage men in His service. This wonderful mystery, impenetrable to any mortal eye, under which God is pleased to shade His glories, may excite us powerfully to a love of solitude and silence, and of retirement from the view of the world. Before the incarnation God remained hidden in the recesses of His divinity, and after it He became, in some respects, more hidden by putting on the veil of our humanity. It had been easier to have known Him while invisible than when He conversed in a visible shape ; and at length, designing to accomplish the promise which He made to His Apostles of continuing with the Church till His second coming, He chose a concealment more strange and

obscure than either of the former under the species of the Eucharist. It is this sacrament which St. John, in his *Apocalypse*, calls the hidden manna, and to which Isaiah perhaps alluded when he cried out, by his prophetic spirit, "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself." This is the last mysterious covering which He will assume. The veil of the divine essence has been penetrated by many heathens and infidels, of whom St. Paul testifies that they were led into the knowledge of the invisible God by the contemplation of visible nature. Many heretical Christians have known Him through the robe of His humanity, and have worshipped Jesus Christ as God and man. But for us, we ought especially to esteem ourselves happy in that it has pleased God to enlighten us to such a degree as to be able to discern Him under the species of bread and wine.

We may add to these considerations the secret of God's holy Spirit, as concealed in the Scriptures. For whereas there are two entire senses, a literal and a mystical, the Jews resting in the former never so much as think that there is another, nor apply themselves to search after it. In the same manner wicked and impious persons, beholding the variety of natural effects, referred them to nature only without confessing the Author of both. So likewise the Jews, observing only the human nature in Christ, did not seek for another. "We thought not that it was he," says Isaiah, in their name. There is nothing in the world but what covers and contains some mystery. The whole creation is but the veil of the Creator. Christians ought,

in every appearance, to see and acknowledge Him. Temporal afflictions overshadow those eternal goods to which they lead ; temporal enjoyments cover and disguise those eternal evils which they procure. Let us pray God that He would grant us the power of knowing Him in all things ; and let us render Him infinite thanks, that being in every object hidden from so many others, He should vouchsafe under every object and by every method to disclose Himself to us.

XXVIII.

CHRISTIAN THOUGHTS.

LIBERTINES and ungodly men who devote themselves blindly to their own passions without either knowing God, or giving themselves the trouble to search after Him, do yet verify by this their conduct one of those foundations of our faith which they particularly oppose, that the present state of human nature is a state of corruption. Again, the Jews, who with so obstinate a spirit resist the evidences of Christianity, confirm in like manner the other great foundation of our faith, which they principally endeavour to destroy, that Jesus Christ is the true Messias, that He came to redeem mankind, and to retrieve us from the misery and corruption into which we were fallen. And this, as well by the estate to which we see them at present reduced, and which was foretold in their own prophecies, as by these prophecies themselves, which are still in their hands, and which with the utmost caution they preserve inviolable, as containing the proper marks and character of their Messias. Thus may the chief evidences, both of the corruption of human nature and of the redemption by Jesus Christ,

which are the two leading articles established by the Christian faith, be drawn from the libertines who cast off the care of all religion, and from the Jews who are irreconcilable enemies to the true.

* The dignity of man, under his primitive innocence, consisted in governing and using the creatures ; but, under his present corruption, it consists in retiring from them, or in submitting to them, and to his own necessities and infirmities.

* There are a great number of truths in faith and in morals which have an appearance of utter repugnancy, and which, nevertheless, in a wonderful order, do all happily consist and conspire with each other.

The ground of all heresy is the denial of some of these truths ; and the source of all the objections made by heretics against the Catholic Church is the ignorance of some of these truths which she constantly maintains.

It happens, for the most part, that heretical men, not being able to conceive the union and harmony of two seemingly opposite truths, and supposing that the admission of the one implies the exclusion of the other, the one they embrace, and the other, by the same principle, they reject.

The Nestorians supposed two persons in Jesus Christ on account of His two natures ; and the Eutychians, on the contrary, but one nature, on account of His single person. The Catholics preserve the right judgment by joining together both truths, of the two natures and of the one person.

So that the shortest way to prevent heresies is expressly to teach all truths ; and the surest method of confuting heresies is to show in what they consist, and upon what mistaken hypothesis they proceed.

* Grace and nature will ever maintain their contention in the world. There will be always Pelagians, and there will be always Catholics ; because the first birth constitutes the one, and the second birth the other.

* It is the Church, which together with Jesus Christ, to whom she is inseparably united, merits the conversion of all those who are in error. And those, at length, approve themselves the truest converts who labour for the safety of their mother, from whom they first derived their own.

* The body can no more live without the head, than the head without the body. He that separates from the one or the other is no longer of the body, nor a member of Jesus Christ. All virtues, all austerity, all good works, and even martyrdom itself, are of no worth out of the Church, and out of communion with the Head of the Church.

* This shall be one amongst the horrors and confusions of the wicked in another life, to see themselves condemned by their own reason, by which they pretended to condemn the Christian religion.

* We ought to judge what is good or evil by the will of God, which is always just and always infallible, and not by our own will, which is so biassed with prejudice, and so blinded with error.

* Our Lord in His Gospel has given this amongst other marks of those who should believe in His name, that they shall speak with new tongues. And indeed the renovation of thoughts and desires naturally causeth that of speech. These new productions, which cannot be displeasing to God, as the old man cannot possibly please Him, are very different from the novelties of the world, because the latter, how fresh and fair soever, are subject to age and decay ; whereas the former (the fruits of the new spirit), the longer they continue the more they still improve in freshness and beauty. "Our old man perisheth," says St. Paul, "and our new man is renewed day by day ;" nor shall we be completely new till our renovation in eternity, when we shall, without ceasing, sing David's new song—the song inspired by the new spirit of charity.

* When St. Peter and the other Apostles consulted about the abolishment of circumcision, where the point in debate was the acting contrary to the law of God, they did not refer themselves to the prophets, but considered barely the gift of the Holy Ghost poured out on persons uncircumcised. They judged it more certain that God approved of those whom He filled with His Spirit, than that He required in all instances an exact and literal observation of the law. They knew the very end of the law to be no other than the spirit, and concluded that since men were capable of the latter without circumcision, they wanted not the preparation of the former.

* Two plain laws might be more effectual in regulating

the whole Christian community than all political institutions, the love of God, and of our neighbour.

* Religion has somewhat in it which is adapted and proportioned to geniuses of every size. The generality of men look no farther than its present condition and settlement in the world. And the nature of Christianity is such, that its very establishment is an invincible argument of its truth. The learned and knowing are able to trace it up to the beginning of the world. The angels still proceed to a nobler height, and contemplate the original plan in the mind of the divine Author.

* Those whom God has inspired with the grace of religion in their hearts and affections are most entirely convinced, and most completely blessed. But as for those who have not yet attained it, we have no way of recommending it to them but by reason and argument; waiting till God shall please to imprint an inward feeling of it on their hearts; without which, all faith, as it is only the conviction of the understanding, is unprofitable to salvation.

* God Almighty, to reserve to Himself the sole right of instructing us, and to render the difficulties of our own being unintelligible to us, has laid the knot so high, or, to speak more properly, so low, that we cannot reach to untie it. So that it is not by the exercise and agitation, but by the bare submission and acquiescence of our reason that we are made capable of truly knowing ourselves.

* Libertines, who make a profession of being wholly guided by reason, ought certainly to be fortified with the

greatest strength of reason. Let us hear, then, what they have to offer. "Do not you observe," say they, "that beasts live and die like men; and Turks like Christians? Have not the followers of Mahomet their ceremonies, their prophets, their doctors, their saints, their religious orders, as we," etc.? But is anything of this contrary to Scripture? Or, saith not the Scripture the same also? If you are fairly resolved to ease yourselves of all trouble in the knowledge of truth, I confess here is enough to keep you in suspense and indifference. But if you desire with your whole heart to know it, here is by no means enough; you ought to go to the bottom, and to inquire with the greatest strictness into each particular. The difficulties you allege might be sufficient to unsettle a vain question of philosophy; but here the subject of debate is all your interest and happiness. And yet, after some slight reflections of this nature, men are contented to amuse themselves, etc. . . .

* What can be more shocking than to feel all our possessions continually sliding through our hands, and yet to acquiesce in this wretched poverty, and to entertain no desire of securing a more fixed and durable treasure!

* There are two contrary suppositions which ought to engage us in quite different methods of life: one, that it is possible for us to abide here for ever; the other, that it is certain we cannot remain here long, and uncertain whether we shall not be removed hence the next hour. The last of these suppositions belongs manifestly to our case.

* You lie under an indispensable obligation to make gradual advances in the search of truth. For if you go out of the world without having paid a due veneration to its Author you are lost for ever. "But," say you, "had He designed that I should pay Him this veneration, He would not have failed to leave me some undoubted tokens of His will." Why, He has really left them; but you are careless of seeking them. At least, therefore, be so rational as to think it worth your pains to seek them.

* An atheist ought to offer nothing but what is perfectly clear and evident. But a man must have lost all his senses before he can affirm it to be perfectly clear and evident that the soul is mortal. I freely disown the necessity of diving into Copernicus's system; but I maintain that it concerns us more than our life is worth to inquire whether the soul is mortal or immortal.

* Who can do otherwise than admire and embrace a religion which contains the complete knowledge of such truths as we still know the more surely according to the greater proportions of our capacity and light?

* A person discovering the proofs of the Christian religion is like an heir finding the deeds and evidences of his estate. Shall he officiously condemn them as counterfeit, or cast them aside without examination?

* I see no greater difficulty than there is in the resurrection of the dead or the conception of the Virgin, than in the creation of the world. Is not the reproduction of human bodies as easy as the first production? Or supposing us to

be ignorant of the natural method of generation, should we think it more strange to see a child from a woman only, than from a man and a woman?

* There is a great difference between peace of conscience and assurance of conscience. The former may be obtained by the sincere search of truth; the latter only by truth itself when actually possessed.

* There are two maxims of faith equally fixed and unalterable: the one, that man in his state of creation (or in that of grace), is raised above all visible nature, made like unto God, and a partaker of the Divinity; the other, that man in his state of corruption and sin is fallen from this pitch of greatness into a resemblance with the beasts. These two propositions are alike firm and certain. The holy Scripture bears a positive testimony to both, for in some places we read, "My delight is with the sons of men,"¹ "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh,"² "I have said ye are gods,"³ etc.; but in others, "All flesh is grass,"⁴ "Man is like unto the beasts that perish,"⁵ "I said in my heart, concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they themselves are beasts."⁶

* To disengage ourselves from our native infirmities is always painful and grievous. We feel not our chain, says St. Austin, while we voluntarily follow our leader. But when we begin to resist and to draw back, it is then we become sufferers; it is then our chain stretches itself, and

¹ Prov. viii. 31.

³ Psalm lxxxii. 6.

⁵ Psalm xlix. 12.

² Joel ii. 18.

⁴ Isai. xl. 6.

⁶ Eccles. iii. 18.

endures the utmost violence. And this chain is our body, which death alone can break. Our Lord observed that before the coming of St. John Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and the violent took it by force. Before we are touched from on high we have nothing but the weight of our own concupiscence, which naturally bears us down to the earth. But when God is pleased to draw us up towards Himself, these two contrary efforts make that violence which we are speaking of, and which God alone is able to overcome. . But we can do all things (in the words of an ancient Father¹) with Him, without whom we can do nothing. We should therefore prepare ourselves with the greatest resolution to suffer this warfare during our life ; because we are not here permitted to hope for peace. Jesus Christ came to bring not peace but a sword. Yet ought we to acknowledge that, as the Scripture says, the wisdom of men is foolishness with God, so this war may be termed a peace wlth God, how uneasy soever it may seem to men ; and of such a peace may our Lord be styled the Author and Prince. Yet the perfection of this peace cannot be attained till the destruction and dissolution of the body. And it is hence that we may be allowed to wish for death ; yet so as courageously to sustain and suffer life for the love of Him who suffered both life and death on our behalf, and who, in the Apostle's phrase, "is able to do for us abundantly above what we can ask or think.

- We should strive to bring ourselves to such a temper as

not to be troubled at any occurrence, but to take every event for the best. I apprehend this to be a necessary duty, and the neglect of it to be properly a sin. For the reason why we term anything sinful, is taken from its repugnancy to the will of God. If, then, the very essence of sin consists in cherishing a will which we know to be contrary to that of God, it seems clear to me that when He is pleased to discover His will to us by events, we are unjustly reputed sinners if we conform not ourselves by a ready compliance and submission.

* When truth is deserted and persecuted, this seems to be the time that the service which we yield to God in its defence is peculiarly acceptable. He permits us to judge of grace by the comparisons of nature. And as a prince dethroned by his own subjects retains a most tender affection for those who continue faithful to him in the public revolt, so we may presume to conceive that God will ever regard those with a peculiar goodness who maintain the purity of religion when it is, on all sides, attacked or oppressed. But here is the difference between the kings of the earth and the King of Kings: that the princes of this world do not make their subjects loyal, but find them so; whereas God never finds men otherwise than disloyal and unfaithful, without the succours of His grace, and is therefore Himself the author of all their constancy and truth. So that while temporal monarchs are wont to own an obligation to those who persist resolutely in their allegiance and duty, those, on the contrary, who persevere

in the service of God, are under infinite obligations to Him for the very power of their perseverance.

* Not the most rigorous austerities of body, nor the most profound exercises of mind, are able to support the pains and grievances of both, but only the good affections of the heart and spirit. For, in short, the two great instruments of sanctification are pains and pleasures. St. Paul informs us that "All those who will live godly in the Lord Jesus Christ" must suffer persecution. Now this ought to comfort as many as feel these disquiets and encounter these difficulties in a course of holy living, because, being assured that the path to heaven, which they seek, is full of them, they have reason to rejoice at their finding so many marks of the true way. So that these pains are not without their pleasures, by which alone they can be balanced or countervailed. For as those who forsake God to return to the world do it because they find more complacency in earthly delights than in the satisfaction of being united to the divine nature, and because this fatal charm, drawing them after it as its captives, obliges them to relinquish their first love, and renders them, as Tertullian speaks, "the penitents of the devil," in like manner, there would be none found who should abandon the enjoyments of the world to embrace the cross of Jesus Christ, did they not feel a more real sweetness in contempt, in poverty, in nakedness, and in the scorn and rejection of men, than all the delicacies and pleasures of sin. And, therefore, as the same Father

observes, "We injure the Christian life if we suppose it to be a life of sadness and sorrow. Because we never quit our engagements to any one pleasure without being invited and bribed by a greater." "Pray without ceasing," says St. Paul; "in everything give thanks, rejoice evermore." It is the joy of finding God which is the spring of our sorrow for having forsaken Him, and of our whole change in life and action. He that has found a treasure in the field (according to the parable of our Lord) is so transported as to go "and sell all that he has, and buy that field." Worldly men have their share of sorrow, but then they are utterly excluded from true joy—that which the world can neither give nor take away. On the other hand, the saints in heaven possess their joy without sorrowing. And good men on earth partake of the same joy, not without a mixture and alloy of sorrow, for having followed other joys, and for fear of losing the former in the latter, which incessantly solicit and engage their affections. We should, therefore, with unintermittent pains and care, endeavour to preserve this sorrow ever fresh and lively in our breasts, as that alone which can secure and moderate our joy; and as oft as we find ourselves carried too far towards the one, to sway and incline ourselves towards the other, that we may maintain the balance, and keep ourselves upright. It is agreeable to the advice of Scripture that we should remember our rejoicings in the day of affliction, and our afflictions in the days of rejoicing, till the promise which our Lord has given us of making His joy perfect in us.

be happily accomplished. In the meanwhile, let us not suffer ourselves to be swallowed up of overmuch sorrow, nor imagine that piety consists in bitterness without consolation. True piety, which receives not its completion but in heaven, is yet so full of satisfaction and delight as to overflow its beginning, its progress, and its crown. It is a light so resplendent as to dart some rays of brightness through its whole compass and sphere. If, in its rise especially, it be shaded with some intermixture of grief, this proceeds from the persons, not from the virtue, and must be looked on, not as the first-fruits of that piety which is now forming in us, but as the relics of that impiety which is not yet destroyed. Could we root out the impiety, the joy would flourish and thrive. Let us therefore ascribe the origin of our sadness not to religion, but to ourselves ; and let us seek our comfort in our own correction.

* What is past ought to give us no uneasiness, except that of repentance for our faults. And what is to come ought much less to affect us, because with regard to us and our concerns it is not, and perhaps will never be. The present is the only time which is properly ours ; and this we ought to use in conformity to the will of Him that gives it. Here, therefore, our thoughts and studies should principally be engaged. Yet the world is generally of so restless a disposition that men scarce ever fix upon the present, nor think of the minutes which they are now living, but of those which they are to live. Thus we are

always in the disposition of life, but never in the act. Our Lord has cautioned us that our forecast should not extend beyond the compass of a day. These are the limits which we ought to observe, as for the sake of our spiritual welfare, so even for that of our natural quiet and repose.

* The reformation of ourselves is often more effectually assisted by the sight of evil than by the example of good. The art of profiting by evil must be of admirable use, because the occasions of it are so frequent and numerous; whereas the subjects of virtuous imitation are so few in number and do so rarely occur.

* In the thirteenth chapter of St. Mark our Lord discourses at large to His disciples about His second coming. And as whatever happens to the Church happens likewise in some manner and proportion to every Christian, so is it certain that this whole chapter describes as well the state of each regenerated person, and the destruction of the old man in him, as the state of the universe, which shall be destroyed to give way to the new heavens and the new earth, according to the word of Scripture. The prediction concerning the ruin of the Temple when forsaken by God (which is the figure of the rejected and reprobate body of sin dwelling in every one of us), and the expression of "not leaving one stone upon another," teach us that we ought to leave no affection of the old man unmortified or unremoved. And those wars and tumults, those contentions, civil and domestic, are so lively a representation

of the inward troubles which men feel at their conversion, that no colours could have painted them to more advantage.

* The Holy Spirit resides invisibly in the remains of those who are departed in the grace of God till He shall appear visibly in them at the resurrection. And it is hence that the relics of the saints become worthy of regard. For God will never leave or forsake those that are truly His, not even in the grave, where their bodies, which are dead to the eyes of men, do now more properly live in the sight of God; being delivered from that sin which ever dwelt in them during this life, as to the root, though not ever as to the fruits and effects. And this root of bitterness, which is inseparable from their bodies before their decease, makes those bodies so long incapable of honour as being till then more worthy of hatred and reproach. Death alone can entirely suppress that unhappy root, and is, upon this consideration, to be chosen rather than life.

* At the final judgment the elect shall be ignorant of their own virtues and the reprobate of their own crimes. Both shall join in that part of the answer, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungry?" etc.

* Jesus Christ refused the testimony, not only of evil spirits, but even of such men as had not a lawful calling and express commission for that purpose; being satisfied with the witness of God and of St. John Baptist:

* When I have been going to set down my thought, it has sometimes escaped me in the very writing. But

this accident, reminding me of my weakness, which I am continually inclined to forget, is a lesson as instructive to me as the lost thought could have proved; because the whole aim of my study is to discover my own feebleness, and vanity, and nothingness.

* Montaigne is a writer most grossly faulty. He abounds in lewd and incident expressions. Let this pass for nothing. But then his thoughts on self-murder and on death are such as we cannot read without horror. He insinuates an idle indifference as to the affair of our salvation, without care of repentance, and yet without fear of danger. Indeed, his work not being composed on a design purely religious, he was not obliged to give men express admonitions to piety, but he was indispensably obliged not to discourage them from it. Were we able to apologise for his libertine thoughts on all other subjects, yet it would be impossible to allege any sort of excuse for his pagan reflections upon death. For a man must have utterly abandoned all goodness if he desire not at least to die like a Christian; and yet a death of indolence and inconsideration is the wish that runs through Montaigne's whole performance.

* That which deceives us in our comparisons between the examples of the ancient Church and the practice of the modern is that we are wont, for the most part, to consider Athanasius, Teresa, and other holy persons as they are now crowned with glory. At present, indeed, when time has cleared up the event, their condition is

such as we describe it in our mind. But when that great saint was persecuted, it was a mere man who bore the name of Athanasius; and when that pious virgin prayed, she differed not from the religious sisters of her order. "Elias was a man of like passions as we are," says St. James, to wean us from that false idea which prompts us to excuse ourselves from the patterns of holy men, as disproportioned to our estate and degree. They were saints, we cry, and not men of our imperfect character and unexalted virtue.

* In dealing with those who have at present an aversion to religion, we ought to begin with showing them that it is by no means contrary to reason; in the next place, we should convince them that it is great and venerable, and inspire them with reverence towards it; after this, we should describe it as highly charming and lovely, to engage their wishes for its truth; and then we may proceed to demonstrate by irrefragable proofs that it is true; we may evince its antiquity and holiness from its awful majesty and sublime elevation; and lastly, may make it appear to be truly amiable, in that it promiseth our only good and happiness.

* We shall sometimes find one single expression of David or of Moses (as for instance, that of the latter, "God will circumcise the foreskin of your hearts") which shall be sufficient to settle their character, and to manifest the Spirit by which they wrote. Supposing all their other discourses to be ambiguous, and to leave a doubt whether they spake by the measures of philosophy or by those of inspiration,

one word of this kind is sufficient to determine all the rest. Here the cloud must vanish, though all should have seemed obscure before.

* Should a man happen to err in supposing the Christian religion to be true, he could be no loser by the mistake. But how irrecoverable is his loss, how inexpressible his danger, who should err in supposing it to be false !

* The most easy rules of living with respect to the world, are the most difficult with respect to God, and so *vice versa*. The duties of religion are the greatest pains of a life which is merely secular, and the greatest pleasures of a life which is holy and divine. Nothing is so natural and agreeable whilst we live in conformity to the world, as to be possessed of high dignities and ample revenues ; nothing is so laborious and difficult while we live according to the will of God, as to possess these advantages without an irregular taste and unwarrantable satisfaction.

The Old Testament exhibits to us the figures of our future happiness, the New prescribes to us the means of attaining it. The figures were those of pleasure and joy ; the means are those of sadness and repentance. And yet under the former, the Paschal lamb was eaten with bitter herbs, "cum amaritudinibus," to teach us that there is no arriving at true joy but by holy sorrow.

* The word Galilee happening to be thrown out by the Jewish rabble before Pilate in their cry against our Lord, occasioned the sending him to Herod, in which the mystery of His being judged by Jews and Gentiles re-

ceived its completion. Thus a mere accident, in appearance, procured the completion of the prophecy.

* Two persons coming from confession, one of them told me that he was full of joy and satisfaction ; the other, that he was full of trouble and fear. Upon which I remember myself to have passed this reflection, that these two men put together would make one good one, and that each was so far defective, in that he had not the sentiments of the other.

* We could not but feel a very peculiar pleasure in being tossed by a tempest, while the vessel was infallibly secured from sinking. Such a vessel is the Church, such tempests are its persecutions.

* As the two great sources of all sin are pride and negligence, so God has been pleased to disclose two of His attributes for their cure, His mercy and His justice. The office and effect of His justice is to abase and mortify our pride, and the office and effect of His mercy is to prevail on our negligence, and excite us to good works. "The goodness of God leadeth to repentance." And, "let us repent" (say the Ninevites) "and see if He will not have mercy on us." Thus the consideration of the divine mercy is so far from being an encouragement to sloth and remissness, that it is the greatest spur to industry and action ; and instead of saying, "If our God were not a merciful God we ought to bend our utmost endeavours towards the fulfilling His commands," it is rational to say, "Because we serve a God of mercy and pity, there-

fore we ought to labour with all our strength to yield Him an acceptable service."

* The history of the Church ought emphatically to be styled the history of truth.

* All that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life: "Libido sentiendi, libido sciendi, libido dominandi." Miserable is that accursed earth which these three rivers of fire do not refresh, but burn! Happy those who remain upon these rivers in immovable safety, without being overwhelmed or carried away with the stream; not standing erect, but sitting on a sure and humble seat, whence they rise not till the day-spring from on high, when, having rested in peace, they stretch forth their hands to Him who will lift them up, and cause them to stand upright in the porches of the heavenly Jerusalem, where they shall be for ever secure from the assaults of pride! And yet are these happy saints at present in tears, not to see all these perishable things vanishing and passing away, but at the remembrance of their dear country, the Jerusalem which is above, after which they sigh incessantly, while the days of their pilgrimage are prolonged.

* A miracle, says the sceptic, would confirm my wavering belief. Men talk after this manner about things at a distance. But those reasons, which being viewed afar off seem the boundaries of our sight, do yet cease to bound it upon our approach. We discover still a new scene beyond; and no prospect can stop the endless activity of

our spirit. There is no general rule, we cry, without an exception ; and no truth so bright and solid as not to have in some part the disadvantage of a flaw. If principles be not absolutely universal, we have sufficient pretence to apply the exception to the case before us ; and by this means we evade all the force of conviction.

* Charity is no figurative precept. To say that Jesus Christ, who came to take away the figure and to establish the truth, came to introduce a figurative charity and to remove the true and real, which was before in possession, is a doctrine not to be entertained or endured.

* The heart has its arguments and motives, with which the reason is not acquainted. We feel this in a thousand instances. It is the heart, and not the reason, which has properly the perception of God : God sensible to the heart, is the most compendious description of true and perfect faith.

* In the time of affliction, the knowledge of external things will never comfort us under the ignorance of morality, but the knowledge of morality will always comfort us under the ignorance of external things.

* The nature of man is so framed, that not only by often hearing himself called a fool, he believes it ; but by often calling himself a fool, he enters into the same opinion. Every person holds an inward and secret conversation with his own breast, and such as it highly concerns him well to regulate, because even in this sense, evil communications corrupt good manners. To study silence as much as

possible, and to converse with God alone, is the true art of persuasion in respect of ourselves.

* Where is the difference between a soldier and a Carthusian, as to the point of obedience? They are equally under duty, and engaged in labours equally painful and grievous. But then the soldier all along hopes to be his own master, and though he never compasses his aim (because captains, and even princes, are always slavish and depending), yet he still wishes for liberty, and useth his whole endeavour to attain it. Whereas the Carthusian, on the contrary, makes a solemn vow never to be at his own disposal and direction. The necessity of perpetual servitude is the same in both persons; only, the one ever desires what the other has for ever renounced.

* Our own will, though it should obtain its largest wish, would always keep us in uneasiness. But the very instant that we abandon our own will, we grow easy. We can never be satisfied with it, nor ever dissatisfied without it.

* It is very unjust that persons should build so much on our familiarity, though they do it with real inclination and delight. We deceive all those whom we encourage in such a dependence. Because we are not, at last, the persons they suppose, and can by no means be able to satisfy their expectations. Do not we stand on the brink of the grave? and must not the object of which they are so much enamoured, be lost and buried with us? As it would not cease to be criminal in us to propagate a falsity,

though we might recommend it with eloquence, and others embrace it with pleasure, so are we in the like degree blamable, if we labour to charm men's affections, and to draw them into an undue confidence and* reliance. We ought to caution persons whom we find disposed to credit a fiction, whatever advantage we might reap by their mistake. In the same manner ought we to warn those who are courting our favour, against engaging themselves in so vain a patronage and protection. Because their whole life ought really to be spent either in seeking after God or in studying to please Him.

* To trust in forms and ceremonies is superstition ; but not to comply with them is pride.

* All other sects and religions in the world are left to the guidance of mere natural reason. Christians alone are obliged not to take their rules of acting from themselves, but to gain the knowledge of those which were delivered by Jesus Christ to His Church, to be transmitted to them. There are certain persons who are aggrieved at this restraint. They desire to have the liberty of following their own imaginations, like the rest of the world. It is in vain that we cry to them as the prophets to the ancient Jews, "Enter into the congregation, inform yourselves of the laws of your fathers, and follow their steps." They are ready to answer us as the same Jews, "We will not go ; but we will certainly do according to the thoughts of our own heart, like the nations round about us."

* There are three means of believing : by inspiration,

by reason, and by custom. Christianity, which is the only rational institution, does yet admit none for its sons who do not believe by inspiration. Nor does it injure reason or custom, or debar them of their proper force; on the contrary, it directs us to open our mind by the proofs of the former, and to confirm our mind by the authority of the latter. But then it chiefly engages us to offer ourselves, with all humility, to the succours of inspired grace, which alone can produce the true and salutary effect: "Ne evacuetur crux Christi."

* A man never does evil with so much complacency, so full purpose and resolution, as when he does it upon a mistaken principle of conscience.

* The Jews, who were called to subdue nations and princes, were themselves the captives and slaves of sin. Christians, whose vocation was to be servants and subjects, are, in the event, the only freemen and the only sons.

* Shall we call it courage in a dying man that he dares, under his weakness and agony, affront an omnipotent and eternal God?

* I would never dispute the credit of a history after the author had sealed it with his own blood.

* There is a virtuous fear which is the effect of faith; and there is a vicious fear which is the product of doubt. The former leads to hope, as relying on God, in whom we believe; the latter inclines to despair, as not relying on God, in whom we do not believe. Persons of the one

character fear to lose God ; persons of the other character fear to find Him.

* Solomon and Job judged the best and spake the truest of human misery ; the former the most happy, the latter the most unfortunate of mankind ; the one acquainted by long experience with the vanity of pleasure, the other with the reality of affliction and pain.

* God does not exact from us that we should blindly submit our faith to Him without all reason, nor intends to awe and control us by mere force. Yet He thinks not himself obliged to render us a reason of all things. And to reconcile these seeming contrarieties, He is pleased clearly to discover to us the divine marks of His own nature, and to procure Himself authority by such wonders and evidences as we are not able to resist ; after which He requires that we should, in all other cases, believe without delay whatever He proposes to us as true, when we find no other reason to reject it, but because we are, of ourselves, unable to discern whether it be true or no.

* The whole world may be divided into these three ranks and orders of men : those who, having found God, resign themselves up to His service ; those who, having not yet found Him, do indefatigably search after Him ; and lastly, those who have neither found Him, nor are inclined to seek Him. The first are happy and wise ; the third are unhappy and fools ; the second must be owned to be wise, as they own themselves to be unhappy.

* Reason proceeds so slowly, and upon so many maxims and views, which it must always keep present before it, that every moment it either stumbles or goes astray for want of seeing all things at once. The case is quite otherwise with sense. This, as it acts in an instant, so it is always prepared for action. When our reason, therefore, has brought us acquainted with the truth, we should endeavour to imprint our faith on the inward sense of our heart, without which it will be ever wavering and uncertain.

It belongs equally to the perfection of Almighty God, that He be infinitely just and infinitely merciful. Yet His justice and severity towards the wicked is still less amazing than His mercy and goodness towards the elect.

XXIX.

MORAL THOUGHTS.

KNOWLEDGE has two extremities, which meet and touch each other. The first of them is pure natural ignorance, such as attends every man at his birth. The other is the perfection attained by great souls, who having run through the circle of all that mankind can know, find at length that they know nothing, and are contented to return to that ignorance from which they set out. Ignorance that thus knows itself, is a wise and learned ignorance. Those persons who lie between these extremities, who have got beyond natural ignorance, but cannot arrive at that ignorance which is the effect of wisdom; have a tincture of science which swells them with vanity and sufficiency. These are the men that trouble the world, and that make the falsest judgments of all things in it. The vulgar, and the truly knowing, compose the ordinary train of men; those of the middle character despise all, and, in return, are despised by all.

* The multitude have a professed veneration for persons

of birth and quality. The half-learned as professedly condemn them ; alleging that the advantage of a noble birth is the merit of fortune, and not of the man. The truly learned respect and honour them ; not upon the motives of the vulgar, but upon a higher view. Persons of much zeal and little knowledge do again despise them, as judging, not by either of these considerations, but by the maxims of religion. But men of an advanced and finished piety are still wont to treat them with esteem and reverence, upon a superior principle and a larger degree of illumination. Thus there is a succession of opinions, for or against, according to the different measures and proportions of knowledge and light.

* The soul loves the hand ; and the hand, if endued with will and choice, ought to love itself in the same proportion in which it is loved by the soul. All love beyond this standard would be partial and unjust.

* “Qui adhaeret Domino unus spiritus est.” A Christian loves himself as a member of that body of which Jesus Christ is the head ; and he loves Jesus Christ as the head of that body of which he is himself a member. Both these motions centre and conspire in the same affection. If the feet or the hands were endued with a separate will, they could never preserve their natural order and employment, otherwise than by submitting this private will to that general and superior will which has the government of the whole body. Without such a resignation they would have a liberty only of confusion and ruin ; whereas in serving

the good of the body, they most effectually consult their own.

* *Concupiscence and violence are the sources of all our actions, merely human. From the former arise those which are voluntary ; and those which are involuntary from the latter.*

* *Whence comes it to pass that we have so much patience with those who are maimed in body, and so little with those who are defective in mind ? It is because the cripple acknowledges that we have the use of our legs, whereas the fool obstinately maintains that we are the persons who halt in understanding. Without this difference in the case, neither object would move our resentment, but both our compassion.*

Epictetus proposes a question of the like nature : why we should not be touched when a man tells us, without any ground, that we have the headache, and yet should fly into a passion when we are taxed, perhaps falsely, with using a weak argument, or making a wrong choice. Now the reason is certainly this : because we are well assured that we have not the headache, or are not lame ; but we are by no means so well assured of the rectitude of our judgment or will. For having in the latter case no evidence but that we behold the thing before us with our whole light when another, with as full a light, sees the direct contrary, this startles and confounds us, especially when we hear the generality of men exploding our mistake ; for then we must prefer our own parts to those of so many thousands who

join in the censure, which is a point not to be compassed without the utmost difficulty and reluctance. But men can never thus contradict each other in the reports of their outward senses.

* The vulgar have many good notions ; as for instance, that hunting and diversion are preferable to the study of poetry. This the half-learned expose as ridiculous, and triumph over the vulgar upon the occasion. Yet in regard to some other notions, as that it is necessary men should be distinguished by external circumstances, as birth, fortune, and the like, the vulgar, and these pretenders to learning, concur in their censure. Because this distinction, for instance, though founded upon good reason, yet is not founded upon reasons which they are capable of penetrating, and therefore is condemned as unjust, while consistent with the most perfect justice.

* It is a great advantage of quality that a man at eighteen or twenty shall be allowed the same esteem and deference which another purchaseth by his merit at fifty. Here are thirty years gained at a stroke.

* There are a sort of men who, to demonstrate the great injustice of our disregard, never fail to urge precedents of such and such great persons, who prize them after an extraordinary manner. The answer I would give to this argument is : do but produce the merit which gained you the esteem of these admirers, and I am ready to add myself to the number.

* The designs which we have most at heart are very

often groundless and impertinent. As for instance, our concealing the narrowness of our fortune. This policy is a mere nothing, which our imagination swells to a mountain. Another turn of imagination would make us as free to discover our circumstances, as we are now industrious to disguise them.

* There are some vices which are retainers to us, not immediately, but by the intervention of others, and which, like branches, fall of course upon our removing the trunk.

* Reason, when it is on the side of ill-nature, displays all its force and compass, and gains a lustre from the pride and fierceness of the passion. Austerity of life and manners, when it has proved unsuccessful in the search of true good, and lets us loose again to follow nature, grows violent upon changing to the extreme.

* To be capable of receiving pleasure only from sport is but a mean pretension to happiness, because all satisfaction of this kind is external and foreign, and consequently dependent; and therefore liable to be disturbed by a thousand accidents, which are the sources of inevitable trouble.

* The world is full of good maxims; all the fault lies in the application. For example, that a man ought to expose his life for the sake of the public, is an universal and undoubted principle, and we see all are ready to practise it in the cause of their country, but few in the cause of their religion.

A man does not pass in the world to have any knowledge of poesy, or of the mathematics, unless he puts out the sign of a poet, or of a mathematician. But persons of true sense and judgment are never for posting up their perfections ; nor will they allow any difference between the trade of a poet and that of an embroiderer. They desire not the title of professors, but will, upon occasion, discover the ability of judges. You must not presume to guess at their talent. They are not for leading the discourse, but are prepared to fall in with every subject of the company. You can never discern in them any one endowment rather than another, but by the necessity of using it ; and it is equally their character that you would not esteem them fine speakers while it was improper to play the orator, and yet would allow them all the praises of eloquence when eloquence was in season. It is therefore a false commendation to extol a man at his first entrance into company as excellent in the art of verse, and it is a bad token, as well as a poor compliment, never to apply to him but when the debate is about some certain lines in a poet. We are made up of wants, and love those only who can fill them. Such an one is an admirable mathematician, they cry ; but my business is not to be done by diagrams. Such an one is master of the art of war ; but I am resolved to keep the peace with my neighbours. The man we wish for must be one of a general character, of sound prudence and sincere probity, who can accommodate himself to all our necessities, and assist us in every affair of life.

* While we continue in good health, we can by no means apprehend how we should be able to bear the severity of a distemper. Yet when we are sick we cheerfully take whatever is prescribed, and grow resolute upon our misfortune. We then no longer covet these opportunities of walking and diversion which we enjoyed in health, but which are incompatible with the necessities of our disease. Nature ever supplies us with a new set of passions and desires agreeable to our present estate. It is not our nature, therefore, but our vain fear which troubles us, by joining to the condition in which we are, the passions of that condition in which we are not.

* Discourses of humility afford matter of presumption to the proud, no less than of submission to the meek. A dogmatist shall conclude positively from the reasonings of a sceptic. Few persons who talk of any virtue, or quality, are inwardly acquainted and affected with it. We are all full of doubling, deceit, and contradiction. We love to wear a disguise, even within, and are afraid of being detected by ourselves.

* It is but a mean character of a man, that he says a great many fine things.

* Self is mean and scandalous ; and therefore they who take no care to remove it, but content themselves barely with concealing it, are still the proper objects of our hatred. By no means, say you ; for to carry it, as we do, fairly and obligingly to all the world, can never put us out of men's good affections. Your reply would be reason-

able, if we hated nothing in self besides the uneasiness and distaste which it gives us. But if we hate it because it is unjust, and because it presumes to be the centre of all things, we shall ever persist in hating it. Upon the whole matter, self has two very ill qualities: it is unjust in its own nature, because it desires to be set up for the universal mark and aim; and it is incommodious to others, because it designs to oppress and enslave them; for self is a common enemy, and aspires to be absolute tyrant of the world. You take away its inconvenience, by keeping it private, but not its injustice; and therefore cannot render it amiable to those who hate it on the latter score. You can only make it agreeable to those who are likewise unjust, and that it does not openly oppose them; but you will still be no less unjust, and must be content to have no friends, or favours, but those of your own complexion.

* I do not admire a man who possesseth any one virtue in its utmost perfection, if he does not at the same time possess the opposite virtue in an equal degree. This was the accomplished character of Epaminondas, that he had the greatest valour, in conjunction with the greatest humanity. To appear otherwise is not to rise, but fall. A man never shows true greatness in being fixed at one end of the line, but he shows it to admiration, if he toucheth both extremities at once, and fills and illustrates all between. Perhaps the soul may still reside in a single point, and by such acts as these may shoot itself by a sudden glance from one boundary to the other. Yet this

is enough to demonstrate the agility of the soul, if not its compass and reach.

* Were our condition really happy, we should have no occasion to divert ourselves from reflecting on it.

* When I began my studies, I spent a considerable time in the pursuit of remoter knowledge ; and the small number of those with whom I could converse in this way discouraged me from proceeding farther. When I afterwards applied myself to study man, I discovered that those abstracted sciences are by no means the proper entertainments of his nature, and that I had strayed farther from my proper condition by sounding their depths, than others by remaining ignorant of them, whose neglect I could therefore easily forgive. I hoped at least to find more companions in my new inquiry ; because this was the proper employment and exercise of mankind. But I was again disappointed, and found, on the whole matter, that those few who study geometry are still more than those who study themselves.

* When all moves equally, nothing seems to move, as in a vessel under sail. When all run by consent into vice, none appears to do so. He that stops first views, as from a fixed point, the extravagance which transports the rest.

* If we would reprove with success, and effectually show another that he is in the wrong, we ought to observe which way he looks on the object (because, that way, it is generally such as he apprehends it), and to acknowledge that he is so

far in the right. He will be satisfied with this method, as intimating that he was not mistaken, but only wanted to have surveyed the thing on all sides. The former imputation is apt to work on our shame and resentment; but the latter gives us no disturbance. The reason of which possibly may be that the understanding, as well as the sense, can never be deceived in that part of a thing which it actually has under its view.

* A man's virtue is not to be measured by some extraordinary efforts and sallies, but by a constant and uniform series of action.

* The great ones and the little ones of the world have all the same accidents, the same passions and follies. But as the former are at the top of the wheel, so the latter are nearer its centre, and therefore less agitated by the common motion and revolution.

* We are for the most part more easily persuaded by reasons of our own finding out, than by any which owe their original to the wit of others.

* Though a man should have no interest to serve in what he reports, yet we must not absolutely, and in all cases, conclude hence that he speaks the truth; because there are some who lie for lying's sake.

* The example of Alexander's continence has not made so many converts to chastity, as that of his drunkenness has to intemperance. Men apprehend no shame in being less perfect than he, and judge it very excusable to be more defective. We are apt to think ourselves much above the

corruptions of the vulgar, when we fall into the vices of these great and renowned persons ; not considering that their vices do really bring them down to the vulgar level. We are proud of joining ourselves to them, by the same common term which joins them to the multitude. How lofty soever their condition may be, there is some hold or other about them by which they are linked to the rest of mankind. They do not hang in the air, or subsist absolutely separate from human society. If they are above us, it is because their head is higher ; their feet are always as low as ours. They all touch the same line and tread the same ground ; and in this respect are not superior to us, nor to children, nor even to beasts.

* It is the combat that pleaseth us, and not the victory. We love to see beasts fighting ; but not the conqueror feeding on the vanquished. The only thing we wish is to behold the issue of the day ; and when that once appears, we are satisfied with the prospect.

It is thus in our diversions, and it is thus in our researches of knowledge. We are amused with the contending opinions, but very little gratified with the decisive truth. For truth itself ceaseth to be agreeable, unless it spring from the midst of contention. The case is the same with our passions ; the struggle of any two amongst them entertains us with delight, but the mastery of either turns into savageness. We do not seek the things themselves (in respect of any objects whatsoever), but we seek the change and variety that is to be met with in pursuing them. This

reason discovers itself on the stage ; where we alike condemn a continued scene of ease and softness without terror ; of extreme misery without hope ; or of brutal love without decency and humanity.

* We do not teach men to be honest, while we teach them all besides ; and yet they pretend to this more than to all. Thus they chiefly value themselves upon knowing that which is the only thing they never learnt.

* What a senseless project it was in Montaigne to give such a picture of himself, and that not by chance and against his ordinary maxims (as all men have their failings), but upon professed principles, and with his main intention ! For to say foolish things through accident or weakness is a common misfortune ; but to say them with full design, especially those of so very gross a character, is insupportably absurd.

* Men of irregular lives are wont to boast that they exactly follow nature, and that those who walk by rule and order are the persons who really deviate from her ; as men in a ship fancy those to move who stand on the shore. Both sides affirm the very same of each other, and we must be placed at some one precise point ere we can judge between them. The distance of the vessel from the haven is a clear decision of the latter controversy ; but who can ever find the like mark to determine the former ?

* To lament the case of the unfortunate is by no means a check upon our natural concupiscence, which may still reign with full power though it gives us leave to show this

expression of humanity, and to acquire the reputation of pity and tenderness. Whence we are to infer that such a reputation can be of no considerable value.

* Would any have thought that a man who enjoyed the friendship of the Kings of England and Poland and the Queen of Sweden should at length have wanted a safe retreat, a shelter and asylum in the world?

* As objects have different qualities, so has the soul different inclinations. Nothing presents itself with the same constant face to the affections; and the affections apply themselves to nothing after the same constant manner. Hence it comes to pass that the same thing which excites our laughter may, upon the very next view, provoke our tears.

* We are of so unhappy a frame that we can take pleasure in no enjoyment, but upon condition of being as much displeased if anything chance to render it less successful to us, as a thousand accidents may and do every hour. He that has found out the secret of delighting himself in good, without disturbing himself with the fear of the opposite evil, seems to have hit on the point of true happiness.

* There are different classes and orders of men—as the valiant, the sparkish, the witty, and the pious—who ought respectively to keep within their own sphere, and not to invade that of their neighbours. Yet how often do we find them at variance, and see the soldier and the beau idly banging one another for the mastery,

whereas they really belong to a different empire! Their fault is that they do not understand themselves, and therefore set up for universal dominion. But nothing can obtain such a dominion, not even force itself, which, while it tyranniseth over external actions, has not the least command over the realms of learning and wit.

* “*Ferox gens nullam esse vitam nisi in armis putat.*” These men would have chosen death rather than peace. There are others who would choose death rather than war. Any opinion which has taken so deep and so natural a root gains an easy preference to life itself.

* How difficult is it for me to propose any matter to the judgment of another without corrupting his judgment by my manner of proposing it! I cannot intimate that it is easy and agreeable, or that it is difficult and obscure, but I shall very probably impose either a favourable or sinister bias on the conceptions of my friend. I ought to give no such intimation of my own sentiments. For then he will pronounce of the thing as it really is, according as its present condition, and those circumstances which are not of my adding, shall represent it. And yet perhaps my very silence, in this case, may have the same ill effect, according to the turn and construction which my friend shall be in the humour to give it, or according to what he may gather from my air and look, or from the tone of my voice in proposing the question. So easy is it to justle reason out of its natural seat, or rather, so infirm and tottering a seat has nature given it.

* The Platonists, and even the Stoics, while they believed that God alone was an object so worthy as to justify our love, did yet desire themselves to be beloved and admired by men. They had no manner of sense of their natural corruption. Had they been really disposed to the love and adoration of God, and felt the most ravishing joy from so divine an exercise, they might fairly have called themselves as good and great as they had pleased. But if they found their hearts under an utter aversion and repugnancy to these duties ; if they had no manner of inclination but to establish themselves in the opinion of men ; and if their whole perfection consisted in being able, without force, to make others propose a happiness in loving and esteeming them, such a perfection ought to be abhorred. For this was their case : they possessed, in some degree, the knowledge of God, and yet courted only the love of men. They were desirous that men should place their hope and confidence in them, and should make them the sole objects of their choice and delight.

* How wisely has it been ordained, to distinguish men rather by the exterior show than by the interior endowments ! Here is another person and I disputing the way. Who shall have the preference in this case ? Why, the better man of the two. But I am as good a man as he, so that if no expedient be found, he must beat me, or I must beat him. Well, but all this while he has four footmen at his back, and I have but one. This is a

visible advantage; we need only tell noses to discover it. It is my part therefore to yield, and I am a block-head if I contest the point. See here an easy method of peace, the great safeguard and supreme happiness of this world!

* Time puts the surest end to troubles and complaints. Because the world continually changeth, and persons and things become indifferent. Neither the aggrieved, nor the party aggrieved, are long in the same circumstances. It is as if we should have personally affronted and exasperated those of a certain nation, and should be able to visit that nation again, two generations hence. We should find the same French (for instance), but not the same men.

* It is infallibly certain that the soul is either mortal or immortal. This ought to make an entire change in morality. And yet so fatal was the blindness of the philosophers, that they framed their whole moral system without the least dependence on such an inquiry.

* The last act of life is always bloody and tragical, how pleasantly soever the comedy may have run through all the rest. A little earth, cast upon our cold head, for ever determines our hopes and our condition.

XXX.

THOUGHTS UPON DEATH: BEING AN EXTRACT FROM A LETTER OF M. PASCAL'S, OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER.

WHEN we are under affliction and trouble for the death of a person who was dear to us, or for any misfortune which we are capable of suffering, we ought not to seek our consolation in ourselves, or in others, or in any part of the creation, but in God alone. And the reason seems to be evident; inasmuch as no created being is the first cause and mover of those accidents which the world calls evil. Since, therefore, they are all to be referred to God as their real Author and sovereign Disposer, it is visibly our duty to repair to this original source, and to expect thence the only methods of solid comfort. If we observe these directions; if we look on the death, for instance, which we are lamenting, not as the effect of mere chance, nor as a fatal necessity of nature, nor as the sport of those elements and particles which constitute our frame (for God never abandons His servants to so capricious events), but as the indispensable and inevitable, the most

holy, and most just, effect of a providential decree, now executed in its time; if we consider that whatever has now happened was from everlasting present to God, and preordained by His wisdom; if, I say, by a noble transport of divine grace, we survey the accident which is before us, not in itself and abstractedly from its Author, but out of itself and in its supreme Author's will, as its true cause, with respect both to the matter and the manner; we shall adore in humble silence His unsearchable judgments, His impenetrable secrets; we shall reverence the holiness of His decrees, we shall bless the guidance of His providence; and uniting our will to the will of God Himself, we shall choose with Him, in Him, and for Him, the very same events which He, in us, and for us, has chosen from all eternity.

* There can be no comfort but in truth. It is most certain that Socrates and Seneca have nothing which may persuade and convince, may ease and relieve us, on these occasions. They were both under the original error which blindeth mankind. They looked on death as really natural to us; and all the discourses which they have built on this false foundation have so much vanity, and so little solidity, as to serve for no other use but to demonstrate the general weakness of human race, since the most elevated productions of the wisest amongst men are evidently so childish and contemptible.

It is not so that we learn Jesus Christ; it is not thus that we read the canonical books of Scripture. It is here

alone that we succeed in our search of truth ; and truth is no less infallibly joined to comfort, than it is infallibly separated from error. Let us then take a view of death, by those lights which the Holy Spirit has given us. And by those we have the advantage of discovering that death is no other than a punishment imposed on man to expiate the guilt, and necessary to man to dissolve the power of his sins ; that it is this alone which can deliver the mind from the concupiscence of the flesh, some degree of which does ever adhere to good men in this world. We are hence instructed that Jesus Christ came into the world as a victim and propitiation, and as such offered Himself to God ; that His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His session at the right hand of the Father, and His presence in the Holy Eucharist, all belong to one and the same sacrifice ; to conclude, we are informed, that what was accomplished in Jesus Christ must be accomplished also in His members.

Let us then consider life as a sacrifice ; and let the accidents of life make no other impression on us than as, in proportion, the accomplishment of this sacrifice is either interrupted or promoted by them. Let us style nothing ill but what turns the sacrifice of God into the sacrifice of the devil ; and let us honour all such things with the name of God, as render that which was a sacrifice to the devil in Adam, a sacrifice to God in Jesus Christ. Let us examine the notion of death by this rule and principle.

In order to which design, it is necessary to have recourse to the person of Jesus Christ: for as God regards not men but through Him as a mediator, so neither ought we to regard ourselves, or others, but with respect to the same mediation.

If we look not through this medium, we shall discern nothing but either real pains or detestable pleasures; but if we see all things as in Jesus Christ, all will conspire for our consolation, satisfaction, and edification.

Let us reflect on death as in Jesus Christ, not as without Jesus Christ. Without Jesus Christ it is dreadful, it is detestable, it is the terror of nature. In Jesus Christ it is fair and amiable, it is good and holy, it is the joy of the saints. All events being rendered sweet in Jesus Christ, death itself has a share in the influence. To sanctify death and sufferings to us, was the reason for which He suffered and died; who, as He was God and man in one person, comprised, at once, whatever was great and illustrious, whatever was humble and obscure; that He might sanctify all things in Himself, sin only excepted, and might be the standing model of all characters and conditions.

Would we know what death is, what it is in Jesus Christ, we must examine the regard which it bears to His continual, uninterrupted sacrifice. And we may observe, that in sacrifices the principal part is the death of the victim. The oblation and sanctification which precede are indeed the dispositions, but death is still the completion;

in which, by renouncing its very life and being, the creature pays to God the utmost homage of which it is capable, thus humbling, and as it were annihilating itself, before the eyes of His majesty, and adoring His supreme existence, who alone essentially exists. There was indeed another part to be performed after the death of the sacrifice, without which it was vain and ineffectual, namely, the acceptance of it by God. This is meant by the Scripture expression, “odoratus est Deus odorem suavitatis.” But this, though it crowned the sacrifice, was rather an action of God towards the creature, than of the creature towards God; and did not hinder, but that the last act of the creature was still determined by its death.

We find each of these circumstances fulfilled in our Lord, upon His coming into the world. “Through the eternal Spirit, he offered himself up to God.”¹ “When he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offerings thou would not; then said I, lo I come to do thy will, O God. Thy law is within my heart.”² We have here His oblation, and His sanctification immediately followed. His sacrifice continued through His life, and was finished by His death. It was needful for Him “to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory.”³ “Though he was a son, yet learnt he obedience by the things which he suffered.”⁴ “In the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears

¹ Heb. ix. 14; x. 5, 7.

² Psal. xl.

³ Luke xxiv. 26.

⁴ Heb. v. 8.

unto him that was able to save him from death, he was heard in that he feared.”¹ Finally, God raised Him again by His glorious power (of which the fire which fell from heaven on the sacrifices was a type), to burn and consume, as it were, His mortal body, and to exalt and restore Him to a life of glory.

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ being thus perfected, as to the action, by His death, and as to the subject, by His resurrection (when the image of the body of sin was absorbed in glory), He had performed all that was on His part; and there remained nothing but that the sacrifice should be accepted of God, and that, as incense, it should ascend, and carry up its odour to the throne of the Divine majesty. In pursuance of which our Lord was perfectly offered, lifted up and received at God’s throne, at His ascension; which He effected partly by His own proper force, and partly by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, with which He was every way encompassed and replenished. He was carried up as the odour of the sacrifices by the air which supported it; the former of which prefigured Himself, and the latter represented the Holy Spirit. And the Acts of the Apostles expressly report that He was received into heaven, to give us an assurance that this holy sacrifice, accomplished on earth, was received and accepted “in the bosom of His Father.”

Let us then not be sorry as Gentiles without hope, for our departed Christian friends. Our loss of them is not to

¹ Heb. v. 7.

be dated from the hour of their death. To speak properly, we then lost them when they were admitted into the Church by baptism. Ever since that admission, they were not ours, but God's; their life was devoted and consecrated to God, their actions bore no regard to the things of this world, but for the sake of God. By their death they are at length entirely disengaged from sin; and it is at this moment that they are accepted by God, and that their sacrifice receives its accomplishment and crown.

They have now performed what they vowed; they have finished the work which God gave them to do; they have discharged that which was the only end of their creation. The will of God is perfected in them, and their will is swallowed up in the divine. What therefore God has joined together let not us put asunder; but by a right understanding and true judgment, let us suppress, or at least moderate the sentiments of corrupt and mistaken nature, which exhibits nothing but false images, and whose illusions disturb the sanctity of those thoughts which from the instruction of Christian truth we ought to have derived.

Let us form our ideas of human dissolution, not on the pagan, but on the Christian model; that is, let them, as St. Paul enjoins, be built on hope, the especial gift and privilege of Christians. Let us look on the remains of a deceased friend, not as a noisome and infectious carcase, according to the fallacious portrait of nature, but according to the assurance of faith, as the eternal and inviolable temple of the Holy Ghost.

For we know that the bodies of the faithful are inhabited by the Spirit of God until the resurrection, which shall be performed by the power of the same Spirit residing in them for that design. This is the sense of the ancient Fathers. And it is for this reason that we pay honour even to the relics of the saints. Nor was it on any other principle that the earlier Christians were wont to put the Holy Eucharist into the mouths of the deceased, because knowing them still to be the temples of the Holy Ghost, they thought them to be still worthy of an union with this holy Sacrament. But the Church has since altered the custom; not because she denies the bodies of good men to be pure and sacred, but because she judges that the Eucharist, which is the bread of life and of the living, ought not to be imparted to the dead.

Let us not consider the faithful who are departed in the grace of God as having ceased to live, which is the false suggestion of nature, but as now beginning to live, which is the infallible testimony of truth. Let us look on their souls not as annihilated and lost, but as quickened and enlivened, and united to the Sovereign Life. And, by attending to these sound doctriner, let us correct the prejudices of error which are so firmly rooted in our mind, and the apprehensions of fear which are so strongly imprinted on our sense.

* God created man under a double passion, one for his Creator, the other for himself; but on this condition, that the love of his Creator should be infinite, that is,

should have no other end but God ; and that the love of himself should be finite, with a constant regard and reserve to his Creator.

Man, in this estate, not only loved himself without sin ; but had sinned, could he possibly have ceased to love himself.

By the entrance of sin into the world, man was deprived of the former of these affections ; and his soul, which was still great and still capable even of an infinite passion, retaining only the latter, this immediately diffused itself, and overflowed all the mighty space which had been evacuated by the love of God. And thus we came to love only ourselves, and to love ourselves infinitely, that is, to love all things with respect only to ourselves.

Behold the origin of self-love. It was natural to Adam ; it was, during his innocence, regular and just ; but became immoderate and criminal upon his fall.

Behold the genuine source of this love, together with the unhappy cause of its viciousness and excess !

The same will hold true of our desire of dominion, of our aversion to business, and of many the like natural motions. And this whole doctrine may be easily applied to our present subject. The fear of death, to Adam in innocence, was not only natural, but just, because human life being then not disagreeable to God, ought to have been agreeable to man ; and death, for the same reason, ought to have been an object of horror, as threatening to cut off a life which was conformable to the divine will. But upon man's transgression,

his life was debased and corrupted ; his soul and body were set at variance one with another, and both with God.

When this fatal change had infected and impaired the holiness of life, the love of life continued still ; and the fear of death remaining with no less vigour, that which was just in Adam was rendered unjust in us.

This is a true account of the fear of death ; whence it sprang, and by what means it was tainted and vitiated.

Let us then clear up the darkness and error of nature by the light of faith. The fear of death was once good and commendable ; but it was so only in Paradise, where could it have prevailed, it must have destroyed a life altogether holy and virtuous. It was therefore just to hate it, while it could not arrive without separating a holy soul from a holy body ; but it is no less just to love it, while it releaseth a soul which is righteous from a body which is impure. It was reasonable to decline it, when it must have dissolved the peace and agreement between soul and body, but by no means when it composes the struggle and contention, otherwise endless and irreconcilable. In a word, while it must have punished a guiltless body, by taking away its liberty of serving and honouring God ; while it must have divided the soul from a body perfectly subject and universally compliant to its will ; while it must have put an end to all the happiness which man is capable of receiving ; it might with justice, so long, have been dreaded, and even abhorred. But now, when it ends a life ever stained with some degrees of impurity ; when it

takes away from the body the liberty of sinning ; when it rescues and delivers the soul from a powerful rebel, which was continually opposing the measures of its safety and bliss, it would be highly injurious to maintain the same opinion.

Let us not abandon the love of life, which attends our nature, because we receive it from God. But then let us apply it to such a life only as God gave it us for, and not to a quite different object.

While we admit and embrace that love which Adam had for his life of innocence, and which even our Lord Jesus Christ retained for His, let us be resolute in hating such a life as is contrary to that which was loved by Jesus Christ. And let us be concerned at such a death only as affected our Lord Himself with some sort of apprehensions, a death happening to a body pure and spotless in the sight of God ; but let us not fear a death which punishes a sinful and purges an impure body, and which therefore ought to inspire us with quite opposite sentiments, were we in any degree possessed of those noble endowments, faith, hope, and charity.

It is one of the most acknowledged principles of Christianity, that whatever happened to Jesus Christ is likewise to be transacted in the soul and in the body of every Christian. So that as our Lord suffered in this life of infirmity and mortality, as He was raised to a new life, and at length carried up into the heavens, where He now sits at God's right hand, in the same manner both the soul and

body are to suffer and die, to be raised again, and to ascend into heaven.

All these particulars are accomplished in the soul during this life, though not in the body.

The soul suffers and dies to sin, in repentance and baptism. The soul is raised to a new life in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The soul relinquisheth this earth and soars towards heaven in leading a heavenly life on earth, which is St. Paul's meaning when he says, "Conversatio nostra in coelis est."

The like changes are not accomplished in the body during this present life, but shall be accomplished after it.

For at our decease the body dies to this mortal life; at the judgment it shall rise to a new life; after the judgment it shall be exalted to heaven, and there reside for ever.

Thus the very same things happen to soul and body, though at different periods; and the revolutions of the body do not take place till those of the soul are completed, that is, not till after death. Insomuch that death, which is the end and crown of the soul's happiness, is but the first beginning, or prelude of happiness to the body.

Behold the admirable conduct of divine wisdom in man's salvation! Upon which subject St. Austin informs us, that God has been pleased to dispose things in this manner, lest, if the final death and resurrection of the human body should be performed in baptism, men would yield themselves obedient to the Gospel on no other motive

but the love and desire of life. Whereas the glory of faith shines out in its chief magnitude and brightness, while we pursue and press towards immortality through the vale and shadow of death.

* It is not reasonable that we should continue absolutely unmoved and unaffected at the misfortunes and evils which befall us, like angels, who have no sentiments or inclinations of our nature; nor is there more reason that we should sorrow without hope, like heathens, who have no feeling, no apprehension of grace. But reason and justice allow that we should mourn like Christians, and be comforted like Christians, and that the consolations of grace should overcome the affections of nature, so that grace may not only dwell in us, but may be victorious and triumphant in us; that by our thus hallowing the name of our Father, His will may become ours, His grace may rule and reign over our nature; that our afflictions may be the matter and subject of a sacrifice which His grace will perfect in us to His glory; and that these particular sacrifices may be so many assurances of the entire and universal sacrifice, in which our whole nature shall be purified and perfected, by the power of Jesus Christ.

Thus shall we make advantage of our own infirmities, while they furnish matter for this whole burnt-offering. And to profit by failings and imperfections is the great aim of Christians, who know that "all things work together" for the elect.

If we observe these things with a closer view, and as

they really are in themselves, we shall not fail to draw from them great improvements of edification. For it being most certain that the death of the body is but the type and image of that of the soul, if we have reason to hope for the salvation of our friends, while we lament their decease, though we may not be able to stop the current of our sadness and displeasure, yet we cannot but reap the benefit of this lesson, that since bodily death is so terrible as to create these disorders in us, the death of the soul is a subject which ought to give us far more inconsolable regret. God having been pleased to deliver to the first those for whom we mourn, we may believe that He has graciously rescued them from the second. Let us contemplate the greatness of our happiness, in the greatness of our misery; and then even the excesses of our grief can be but the just standard of our joy.

One of the most solid and useful charities towards the dead, is to perform that which they would enjoin us were they still in the world; and to put ourselves, for their sakes, into that condition which they wish us in at present.

By this means we shall make them, in some sort, revive in ourselves, while it is by their counsels and instructions that we live and act. And as the authors of heresies are punished in another life for the sins to which they have moved their followers, in whom their poison still operates after their death, so good men are recompensed in a better state, not only for their own virtues, but for the virtues of

those whom they have engaged by their precepts, and influenced by their examples.

* Man is undoubtedly too weak to form a solid judgment of futurities. Let us trust in God, and not fatigue ourselves with indiscreet and unwarrantable apprehensions. Let us depend on the divine assistance for the conduct and issue of our lives, and let us not yield ourselves up to disconsolateness and despair.

St. Austin observes that there is in every man a serpent, an Eve, and an Adam. Our senses and natural affections are the serpent, our concupiscence is the Eve, and the Adam is our reason.

Nature continually tempts and allures us, concupiscence ever wisheth and covets, but sin is never finished, unless reason authorise it by its consent.

Let us leave our serpent and our Eve to carry on our solicitations, if we may not entirely expel them. But let us pray God so to fortify our Adam by His grace, that we may yield ourselves to be governed only by Jesus Christ, and that He may reign in us triumphantly for ever.

XXXI.

MISCELLANEOUS THOUGHTS.

THE greater degree of parts and sagacity any one is master of, the more originals he will discern in the characters of mankind. Persons of ordinary endowments are utter strangers to this difference amongst men.

* A man may have good sense, and yet not be able to apply it alike successfully to all subjects, for there are those who judge exactly within one certain order of things, and yet are quite lost and confounded in another. Some are excellent in drawing consequences from a few principles, others from many. Some, for instance, have an admirable understanding of hydrostatics, where the principles are few, but the consequences so fine and delicate as not to be reached without the greatest penetration. And these persons would perhaps be no extraordinary geometricians, because the principles of geometry are vastly numerous; and because a genius may be so formed as with ease to search a few principles to the bottom, and yet not to comprehend things with the same accuracy where the principles are diffused to a larger compass.

There are two sorts of geniuses, therefore, the one disposed for a deep and vigorous penetration into the consequences of principles, and this is a genius properly true and just; the other fit to comprehend a great number of principles without confusion, and this is the genius for geometry. The one consists in the force and exactness, the other in the extent and capacity of thought. Nor is this distinction without ground, because a genius may be vigorous and yet contracted; or it may have, on the contrary, a great reach and little strength.

There seems to be a wide difference between a genius for the mathematics and a genius for business or policy. In those sciences the principles are gross and palpable, yet so far removed from vulgar use that a man is at a loss to turn his head that way for want of practice; but upon the least application he sees them all at their full, and must have a very untoward judgment if he draws wrong inferences from principles which are too big to be overlooked, and too distinct to be confounded.

But in business and policy, the principles are taken from daily custom, and from the actions of the whole world. There is no need here of giving our head a new ply, or of committing violence on ourselves. The only point is to have a good discernment; but then it ought to be very good, because these principles are so numerous and so independent, that it is hardly possible but some of them should escape us. And yet the omission of any one principle breaks the whole thread, and betrays us into

error. A man in this case must be clear and capacious, that he may comprehend the whole set of principles, and he must likewise be just and solid, that from known principles he may not deduce false conclusions.

Every geometrician would, therefore, be a man of business if he were not too short-sighted, for he seldom argues wrong when he is thoroughly acquainted with his principles. And every man of business might be a geometrician, if he could once turn his thought to the less obvious principles of geometry.

The reason, then, why some persons of management and subtlety are not equally qualified to excel in mathematics, is because they cannot bend the whole stress of their mind to principles which lie so far out of the road ; and the reason why some persons admirably successful in the study of the mathematics are less happy in civil business, is because they are purblind in the things which lie just before them. For these latter having been accustomed to principles which are full and distinct, and having never reasoned, even from these principles, till they have viewed them a considerable time, and have handled them after their own way, they cannot but lose themselves in matters of political address. Here the principles will not submit to be thus treated and managed ; they are not to be discerned without difficulty ; the mind rather feels than sees them ; and it would require almost an infinite labour to work a perception of them in those who have it not by their own natural sagacity. These things are so nice and

so numerous that a man must have the clearest and finest understanding to apprehend them ; and, if apprehended, it is very seldom that they can be so regularly demonstrated as the subject of geometry, because no one can pretend to have so firm a hold of their principles and necessary foundations, this being a task next to impossible. We must see them at one immediate view, without the train and progress of reason ; at least, the intuitive knowledge of them must be extended to such a degree ere the rational can proceed. Thus it rarely happens that either of these geniuses can advance any steps in the province of the other. The masters of geometry sometimes make themselves ridiculous by endeavouring to confine the subjects of business to their own method, and by retaining the way of definitions and maxims, a process which this kind of reasoning will not bear. Not but that the mind does the very same thing which they propose to do by their rules ; but then the mind does it silently and naturally, without art or show, and in a way above the capacity of most men to conceive, and of all to express.

On the other side, the politic heads, having been used to judge of things in the way of intuition, are so amazed when we offer them problems which they apprehend nothing of, and such as they cannot enter into, but through a series of definitions and barren maxims, that they find them soon disheartened, and inclined to give over the pursuit. But then it is certain, between both, that a false genius will neither make a geometry professor nor a privy counsellor.

Men who have a genius only for mathematics will be

true and exact in thinking, provided all things are explained to them in their own formal manner ; otherwise their judgment will be erroneous and insupportable, because they never proceed right, but upon principles of which they have a perfect view. Again, those who have a genius only for business are seldom patient enough to descend into the first principles of speculative and abstracted things, which they have not encountered in common life and action.

* It is easier to die without the thought of death, than to think of death without the apprehension of danger.

* It often happens that in the proof of certain common rules, we make use of such examples as might reciprocally have been proved by the same rules. Nor is the former method without its use ; because being ever wont to suppose that the obscurity lies on the side of the thing to be proved, we there discover more light and evidence in the examples. So that if we would illustrate a general truth, we instance in a particular case ; and if we would decide a particular case, we begin with the general truth. We ever fancy somewhat of doubt and difficulty in the subject of the question, and somewhat clear and convictive in the medium by which we would evince it. We propose the former under the notion of its being obscure, and we apply the latter under the notion of its being perspicuous, and thus assist our understanding either way in gaining its point.

* We ordinarily presume that all men have the same apprehension and sense of the same object when presented to them ; but we presume thus much upon a precarious

title, and without real proof. I know very well that men apply the same words to the same occasions ; as when two persons look on the snow, both the one and the other expresseth the appearance of this object by the same term of white. From this conformity of speech we draw a strong conjecture for the like conformity of idea, which, though highly probable, yet is not absolutely demonstrative.

* All our reasonings turn at last upon a submission to sense. Now our fancy is like our sense in one respect, and unlike it in another : like, because it cannot reason ; and yet unlike, because it is false and treacherous. And hence it comes to pass that these two powers, though opposite to each other, are so hard to be distinguished. A man pretends that my sense is fancy, and that his fancy is sense, and I am even with him, by showing myself the same favour. There is need of a rule in this case ; and reason indeed offers us one, but such as is pliable either way, and so leaves us, in effect, without any rule at all.

* Those who judge of any work by rule are in respect of others, like a man who has a watch, when the rest of the company have not. One friend says we have been two hours together, another affirms it to have been but three-quarters of an hour since we met. Here I privately look upon my watch, and tell one that he is melancholy, and the other that he is merry, because we have been together precisely an hour and a half ; and I despise those that tell me time passeth as I please to make it, and pretend that I judge of it by my fancy, not knowing that I judge of it by my watch.

* There are men in the world who are good speakers and ill writers. The reason of which seems to be that the place, the company, etc., warms and ripens them, and draws more out of their genius than it could produce without such an actuating heat.

There is nothing which does more mischief than our unhappy custom of following the exception instead of the rule. We ought severely to hold to the rule, and resolutely to oppose the exception. And yet because there will be always some allowable exceptions, this severity ought to be tempered with justice.

* It seems, in one sense, not absurd to affirm that the whole world is under a delusion. For though people's opinions may really and in themselves be sound, yet they are not sound in their heads; because they generally mistake, by fancying truth to be where it is not, and by pointing to the wrong place.

* Those who have a genius for inventions are but few, those who have none are vastly the more numerous, and, by consequence, the stronger side. And we find the latter commonly making use of this advantage of number and strength, in denying the authors of rare discoveries the glory which they seek and deserve by their labours; who, if in spite of ingratitude they vigorously maintain their title to applause, and express a contempt of the unskilful and partial multitude, all they get by their obstinacy is to be exposed for enthusiasts and visionaries. A man ought, therefore, to be very cautious of assuming

to himself this honour, how considerable soever in merit, and ought to rest satisfied with the approbation of those few who know how to set a true value on him and his studies.

* The understanding naturally believes, and the will naturally loves ; so that if either of them be not directed to true objects, it must necessarily take up with false.

* Many things which are true have been contradicted ; many which are false pass without contradiction. To be contradicted is no more a mark of falsehood than not to be contradicted is a mark of truth.

* Cæsar was too old, in my opinion, to amuse himself with projecting the conquest of the world. Such an imagination was excusable in Alexander, a prince full of youth and fire, and not easy to be checked in his hopes. But Cæsar ought to have been more grave.

All the world sees that men venture for uncertainties ; in voyages, in war, etc. But all the world does not see the particular rule by which men proceed, and which demonstrates that they ought thus to venture. Montaigne knew it to be true in fact, that men have a natural disgust for formal fools, and that custom governs all things ; but he could not have given a reason for either of these truths. Those who see not the causes of things, but the bare effects, are, in regard to those who see the causes, like those who have eyes in regard to those that have none. For effects are, in a manner, the objects of outward sense ; but causes are discernible only by the understanding. And though it is the understanding

likewise which takes cognisance of effects, yet this act of the understanding bears no more proportion to that nobler act which distinguishes the causes, than the bodily eye to the eye of the mind.

* The sense we have of the falseness of those pleasures which are present, and the ignorance we are under ~~as~~ to the vanity of those pleasures which are absent, are the two great sources of all our levity and inconstancy.

* If we dreamed the same thing every night, it might perhaps affect us no less than the objects which we encounter by day. And if an artisan should be sure of dreaming as often as he went to bed that he was a king, I think he would be as happy as a king who should dream constantly, for the same space, that he was an artisan. Should we every night dream that we were pursued by our enemies, so as continually to lie under the fright of these troublesome phantoms, or that we were engaged in a succession of labour, as in travelling or the like, we should suffer almost as much as if the things were real ; and should be as much afraid of sleeping as we are now afraid of being awake, when we apprehend ourselves to be entering upon these misfortunes or difficulties. And the consequence of the reality could scarce be more fatal than that of the imagination. But because our dreams are ever varying from themselves, what they present us with strikes us more faintly than what we behold with open eyes, which is for the most part uniform, equal, and consistent. Not but that this latter way has also its

changes, though not with such frequency, or so great abruptness, but in the manner of an easy journey. And hence came the phrase of our being “in a dream”: for life is indeed but a dream, though of a less inconstant and irregular kind.

* Kings and princes sometimes retire for their diversion. To be always on the throne would be a wearisome slavery. Greatness must upon occasion be abstained from, to preserve and refresh the taste of it.

* It is surprising to consider there are men in the world who, having bid defiance to all the laws of God and nature, do yet constitute laws amongst themselves, to which they pay the exactest obedience; as for instance, thieves, etc.

* Those mighty efforts and sallies to which the mind sometimes attains, are things which it cannot keep possession of; it wins them by a vigorous flight, and loseth them by as sudden a fall.

* Provided we know the ruling passion in any man, we assure ourselves of being able to please him. And yet every man has his peculiar fancy and humour, contrary to his real good, even in the idea which he forms of good; and this diversity breaks and disconcerts the measures of those who are studious of winning upon the affections of others.

* By the means which we corrupt our judgment, by the same we corrupt our sense. Now both our sense and judgment are chiefly formed upon conversation; so that

good or ill company may make or mar them. It is therefore of the greatest importance to choose our company well, that we may confirm and not debauch our powers ; and yet it is hardly possible to make this good choice, unless they are already confirmed and not debauched. Thus the whole matter runs in a circle, which, without a very particular happiness, we shall never get out of.

* We naturally suppose ourselves more capable of diving to the centre of things, than of embracing the circumference. The visible extent of the world plainly surpasseth us and our faculties. But because we ourselves do likewise surpass, with a great disproportion, the minuter parts of nature, we fancy that these must necessarily fall under the command of our mind. And yet it requires the same (that is, an infinite) perfection and capacity to descend to nothing, as to extend to all. And I am persuaded that if a man could penetrate into the first elements of things, he might, by the same strength, arrive at the comprehension of infinity. Each labour depends on the other ; each conducts to the other. These vast extremities, the farther they reach, the more surely they meet and touch, reuniting at length in God, and in God alone.

If a man did but begin with the study of himself, he would soon find how incapable he was of proceeding farther. For what possibility is there that the part should contain the whole ? It seems, however, more reasonable that we should at least aspire to the knowledge of the

other parts, to which we bear some proportion and resemblance. But then the parts of the world are so nicely interwoven, so exquisitely linked and encased one within the other, that I look upon it as impossible to understand one without another, or even without all.

To instance in ourselves. Man has really some dependence on everything that he knows. He has need of place, to contain him; of time, to lengthen out his duration; of elements, to compose his frame; of motion, to preserve his life; of heat and food, for nourishment; of air, for respiration. He sees the light which shines upon him, he feels the bodies which encircle him; in short, he contracts an alliance with the whole world.

In order, therefore, to an exact knowledge of man, we must know whence it comes to pass that air, for example, should be necessary for his subsistence; and to apprehend the nature of air, we should know by what particular means it has such an influence on the life of man.

Again, flame cannot subsist without air; therefore the philosophy of the one depends on that of the other.

All things then being in different regards, effects and causes, dependents and assistants, near and remote, holding communication with each other by a natural though imperceptible line, which unites the most distant in place and most repugnant in kind, I see no possibility either of knowing the parts without the whole, or of knowing the whole without a distinct apprehension of the parts.

And what seems to fix and complete our utter inability

for the knowledge of things is that they are all in their own nature simple, whereas we are composed of two opposite natures, spirit and body. For it is impossible that our reasoning part should be other than spiritual. And as for the extravagance of those who will allow themselves to consist of nothing but body, this excludes them still more forcibly from all acquaintance with the objects about them, it being a most unconceivable paradox to affirm that matter is capable of reflection or thought.

It is this composition of body and spirit which has made the philosophers almost universally confound the ideas of things, ascribing to body the properties of spirit, and to spirit the affections of body. Thus they tell us, with good assurance, that bodies have a tendency downwards ; that they aspire to their proper centre ; that they shun their own destruction ; that they avoid a vacuum ; that they have their peculiar inclinations, sympathies, and antipathies ; all which belong purely to spirit. But on the other hand, if spirits are the subject of their discourse, they consider these as circumscribed in place, as endued with local motion, etc., which ought in justice to be applied to body only.

Instead of receiving into our mind the true and genuine ideas of things, we strike a tincture of our own compound being on all the simple objects which we contemplate.

While we make no scruple to compose the whole world of spirit and body, might it not seem natural to infer that we really apprehend this composition ? And yet this is

what, of all things, we are most at a loss to apprehend. Every man is to himself the most prodigious object in the extent of nature; for as he knows little of body, and less of spirit, so he knows least of all how body should be united to spirit. This is the very complication of all his difficulties; and yet this is no other than his own proper being. “*Modus quo corporibus adhaeret spiritus comprehendi ab hominibus non potest: et hoc tamen homo est.*”

* In natural things (the knowledge of which is not necessary to us), since there are many which exceed our discovery, it may perhaps be not amiss that there should be some universal error to bound and fix the pursuits of men. Such, for instance, as the vulgar opinion concerning the moon, which ascribes to her the change of seasons and the progress of distempers. For it seems to be one of the principal infelicities of mankind to entertain a restless curiosity for things which it is impossible they should understand. And I question whether it would not be a less evil, with regard to things of this kind, to lie under an invincible mistake than to indulge an unprofitable inquiry.

* “This dog is mine,” says the poor child; “this is my place, in the sun.” From so petty a beginning may we trace the tyranny and usurpation of the whole earth.

* The judgment and understanding have their proper method, which is by principles and demonstrations. The heart and affections have a method altogether different. A man would expose himself very remarkably who should

go about to engage our love by laying down, in a philosophical order, the springs and causes of that passion.

Our blessed Lord and St. Paul have oftener used the method of the heart, which is that of charity, than the other of reason and judgment; because the principal design of their discourses was not so much to inform as to excite and inflame. St. Austin takes the same way, which chiefly consists in such lively digressions upon every point, as may illustrate the main end and keep it ever in view.

* The common idea which we form of Plato or Aristotle represents them in their garb of professors, and as persons of composed seriousness and immovable gravity, whereas they were really honest gentlemen who could laugh and jest with a friend as well as ourselves. And it was in this vein of mirth and humour that they framed their laws and systems of polity. The time they spent upon these projects was the most unphilosophical part of their whole life. When they pleased to be philosophers in earnest, they had no other care or thought than how to live with privacy and tranquillity.

* There are some writers who always love to put a mask upon the face of nature. There is no such person with them as a king, but a “grand or august monarch”; no such place as Paris, but “the metropolis and capital of a mighty kingdom.”

* When in perusing a piece we find some words often repeated, yet such as we cannot change for others without a manifest disadvantage, we ought by all means to let them

stand. For this is a true mark of their propriety, and it was only our envy that made us critics, which was so blind as not to see that the repetition was elegant on this occasion, there being no general rule in the case.

* Those who bring in forced words to preserve the antithesis, are like those who make false windows to preserve the symmetry. Their rule is, not to speak good sense, but good point and turn.

* There is a first model of agreeableness and beauty, which consists in a certain relation between our own nature, such as it is, whether weak or strong, and the thing with which we are affected. Whatever is formed upon this model takes and delights us ; it is all the same in building, in singing, in speaking, in verse, in prose, in women, in birds, in rivers, in trees, in chambers, in dresses. Whatever differs from this model is always displeasing to persons of a true relish and discernment.

* As we talk of beauties in poetry, so we ought to talk of beauties in geometry, and beauties in physic ; and yet we never use these phrases. The reason of which is, because we have an adequate idea of the objects of geometry and physic ; but we understand not wherein that agreeableness consists which makes the object of poetry. We are at a loss to know the real model and standard of nature which ought to measure such compositions, and for want of this knowledge we invent a set of extravagant metaphors, such as the Golden Age, the Wonder of our Times, the Fatal Laurel, the Lovely Star, etc., and we stamp this jargon with

the name of poetical beauties. But now if we were to imagine a woman dressed by the same pattern, we should have a certain airy damsel bedecked with plates of looking-glass and tinsel chains. And a nymph thus attired would be much fitter to engage our laughter than our love. Because we better apprehend what is just and decent in the habit of a woman than in the ornaments of a poem. But they who had not the like gift of discernment might still admire the lady in this antic equipage, and many a village of good note would infallibly worship her for the Queen. Whence some persons of wit have styled the sonnets and stanzas composed after this fantastical manner, the Queens of the May.

* When a just and natural discourse points out some particular passion or effect, we feel in our breasts the truth of what we read (because it was really there before, though without our notice), and we find ourselves disposed to love the person who has caused us thus to feel it, for he seems to have given us a specimen, not of his goods, but of our own; and this civility entitles him to our affection, besides that such an affinity and resemblance of thought fails not to beget a kindness and endearment of soul.

* All true eloquence must be composed of what is agreeable and what is real; but then, even the agreeable part ought, in its kind, to be likewise real.

Ordinary judges, when in reading they meet with a natural and proper style, are quite astonished, because they looked for an author, and they find a man. But those who have the happiness of a true taste are no less surprised

when looking for a man they find an author. "Plus poeticè quam humanè locutus est." We are very large in our compliments to nature, if we pretend that she is able to speak of all subjects, and even of divinity.

* In composition we ought never to draw off the mind from one thing to another, unless it be purely for the sake of refreshment, and then it must be at such time when refreshment is exactly proper and seasonable, and at no other. For he that goes about to divert his reader without occasion, does but weary and disgust him. Men are too nice and fastidious to bear an unnecessary officiousness, so hard it is to obtain anything from them but upon the fund of pleasure ; a coin which fails not to purchase all that this world affords.

* Mankind have indeed a natural love for bitterness and severity, yet for such as is by no means exercised against those who are afflicted with ill fortune, but against those who are proud and insolent under good ; and we shall find ourselves in a mistake if we pass any other judgment on this matter.

* Martial's epigram upon the poor one-eyed men is even good for nothing, because it affords not the least consolation, nor serves for any other use than to give an edge to the vain-glory of the author. But an author can never be of value, when he proposeth himself as the sole end of his writing. "Ambitiosa recidet ornamenta." We should study to please those who have a sense of tenderness and compassion, not those who are barbarous and inhuman.

A PRAYER OF M. PASCAL, COMPOSED IN SICKNESS.

I.

O LORD, whose Spirit is so good and gracious in all things, and who art so infinitely merciful, that not the prosperities alone, but even the distresses which happen to Thy chosen are the effects of Thy mercy, grant that I may not bring a pagan mind to my present afflictions; but that, like a true Christian, I may in all events acknowledge Thy justice and Thy providence. For the altering of my condition can no way affect or influence Thine. Thou art ever immutable, though I am ever subject to change. Thou art the same God, no less in afflicting and punishing than in the midst of Thy indulgences and plentiful consolations.

II.

THOU gavest me health to be spent in serving Thee; and I perverted it to a use altogether profane. Now Thou hast sent a sickness for my correction. Oh, suffer me not to use this likewise, as a means of provoking Thee by my impatience. I abused Thy gift of health, and Thou hast justly punished me for my neglect. Oh, keep me from

abusing Thy very punishment. And because the corruption of my nature is such that it renders Thy favours pernicious to me, grant, O God, that Thy all-powerful grace may render Thy chastisements wholesome and beneficial. If I had a heart filled with affection for the world while I enjoyed any degree of strength and vigour, destroy that vigour for my soul's health, and, whether by weakening my body or by inflaming and exalting my charity, render me incapable of delighting in the world, that my delight may be only in Thy Name.

III.

O God, before whom I shall be obliged to give an exact account of my actions at the end of my life, and the end of the world; O God, who permittest the world, and all things in it, to subsist only for the probation of the good and for the punishment of the wicked; O God, who leavest hardened sinners to enjoy the world with a delicious but criminal use; O God, who appointest our body to die, and who, at the hour of death, removest our soul from all that it doted upon here; O God, who at the last moment of my life wilt forcibly separate me from all things that have engaged my thoughts, and taken up my heart; O God, who wilt consume the heavens and the earth at the last day, and all the creatures they contain, to convince men that nothing subsists but by Thy hand, and that nothing besides Thee deserves our love, because besides Thee nothing is fixed and permanent; O God, who wilt destroy all these vain idols, all these fatal objects of our

affections ; I praise Thee, O God, and I will bless Thee while I have my being, for that Thou hast been pleased, of Thy favour towards me, already to anticipate the dreadful day, by already destroying all things to my taste and thought, under this weakness which I suffer from Thy providence. I praise Thee that Thou hast given me this divorce from the sweetness of health, and from the pleasures of the world, and that Thou hast, for my advantage, in some sort consumed these vain idols, which Thou wilt effectually consume, for the confusion of the wicked, in the day of Thy wrath. Grant, O Lord, that I may judge myself after this seeming destruction which Thou hast made in my behalf ; so that after the final destruction which Thou wilt make of my life, and of the world, I may escape when judged by Thee. I know, O Lord, that at the instant of my death I shall find myself entirely separated from the world, stripped naked of all things, standing alone before Thee, to answer to Thy justice concerning all the motions of my thoughts and spirit ; grant that I may look on myself as dead already, separated from the world, stripped of all the objects of my passion, placed alone in Thy presence to implore Thy mercy for the conversion of my heart ; and that I may gather hence matter of exceeding comfort, that Thou shouldest be pleased first to send this image and appearance of death as the subject of Thy mercy, before Thou sendest a real dissolution to exercise Thy justice. As Thou seemest to have prevented the time of my death, so let me prevent the rigour of Thy sentence ; and let me so

examine myself before Thy judgment, that in Thy judgment I may find mercy.

IV.

GRANT, O Lord, that I may, with an obedient silence, adore the methods of Thy divine wisdom in the disposals of my life, that Thy rod may comfort me, and that having lived in the bitterness of my sins while I enjoyed the good things of my peaceable condition, I may taste the heavenly sweetness of Thy grace during these salutary evils with which Thou hast afflicted me. But I am sensible, O my God, that my heart is so hardened, so full of worldly ideas, engagements, solicitudes, and disquiets, that neither health, nor sickness, nor discourses, nor books (not even Thy sacred Word and Gospel), nor Thy most holy mysteries, nor alms, nor fastings, nor mortifications, nor miracles, nor the use of Thy Sacraments, nor the sacrifice of Thy precious body, nor all my endeavours, nor the endeavours of the whole world together, can effect anything towards the beginning of my conversion, if Thou blessest not all these means with the extraordinary succours of Thy grace. I address unto Thee, Almighty Lord, to entreat from Thy bounty a gift which the joint concurrence of created things can never procure or bestow. I should not have the boldness to direct my cries to Thee, were there besides any that could hear and could relieve them. But, O my God, since the conversion which I now beg of Thy grace is a work exceeding all the powers of nature, to whom can I apply but to the Almighty Master of my

heart and of nature itself? To whom, O Lord, should I cry; to whom should I flee for succour unless unto Thee? Nothing that is not God can fix my confidence or fill my desires. It is God alone whom I ask and seek; it is Thou alone, O my God, whom I implore for the obtaining of Thyself. O Lord, open my heart, enter this rebellious place, possessed by my vices and my sins. They at present hold it in subjection; do Thou enter, as into the strong man's house; but first bind the strong and powerful enemy who is master of it, and then spoil it of the treasures which it now conceals. Rescue and retrieve my affections which the world has robbed me of; spoil Thou the world of this treasure; or rather resume it as Thy own, for to Thee it is but a just tribute, because Thy own image is stamped upon it. The treasure was of Thy forming, at the moment of my baptism, my second birth; but it is wholly impaired and defaced; the image of the world is graven so strongly upon it that Thine is no more discernible there. Thou alone wast able at first to create my soul; Thou alone art able to create it anew. Thou alone couldst imprint on it Thy image; Thou alone canst revive and refresh that defaced image; even Jesus Christ, the express image of Thy substance.

v.

O my God, how happy is the soul which can love so charming an object; where the affection is so honourable, the alliance so full of benefit and safety! I perceive I

cannot be enamoured of the world without incurring Thy displeasure, without prejudicing and even degrading myself; and yet the world is still the mark of my desire. O my God, how happy are the souls which have fixed their desire on Thee, because this is an affection to which they may give themselves wholly up, not only without scruple, but with commendation! How firm and lasting is their happiness whose expectation can never be defeated, because Thou failest not; and because neither life nor death can separate them from this divine object of delight! For the same moment which shall involve the wicked, together with their idols, in a common ruin, shall unite the just to Thee in a common glory; while as the former perish with the perishing objects to which they had ensnared their affections, the latter subsist eternally in that eternal and self-subsisting object to which they were so familiarly allied. Oh, the happiness of those who, with an absolute choice and preference, and with an invincible bent of inclination, are able to love perfectly and freely what they are engaged to love out of duty and necessity!

VI.

PERFECT, O my God, the good motions Thou hast wrought in me. Be Thou their end, as Thou art their beginning. Crown Thy own gifts, for Thy gifts I acknowledge them to be. I acknowledge them, O God, and am so far from presuming on any such merit in my prayers as should oblige Thee to a necessary grant, that I likewise most

humbly acknowledge that, having given up to the creatures this heart which Thou formedst purely for Thy own service, not for the world nor for myself, I can expect no means of favour but from Thy mercy ; because I have nothing in me that can engage Thy assistance, and because all the natural movements of my heart, being directed either towards the creatures or towards myself, can have no force with regard to Thee, but that of incensing and provoking Thee. I thank Thee, therefore, O my God, for the good motions Thou hast inspired, and for this amongst the rest, the grace of thanking Thee for them.

VII.

STRIKE my heart with true repentance for my faults ; because without this pain and grief of mind the evils with which Thou hast stricken my body will only procure to me a new occasion of sin. Make me rightly to understand that the evils of the body are nothing else but the punishment, and at the same time the figure and resemblance of those which happen to the soul ; but, O Lord, make them prove likewise their remedy by making me consider, in the bodily pains I feel, those in my soul, which I feel not, though my soul as well as body is overspread with sickness and sores. For my greatest evil of soul is this insensibility and this extreme weakness, which disables it from all apprehension of its own miseries. Give me a lively sense of these miseries, my past offences, and grant that the residue of my life may be one continued penitence to wash away their stain.

VIII.

O LORD, although my life has been hitherto free from more grievous crimes—the occasions of which Thou hast been pleased in mercy to remove—yet it must needs have been exceedingly hateful to Thee by reason of my habitual neglect, my abuse of Thy most holy Sacrament, my contempt of Thy Word and inspirations, by the idleness and unprofitableness of all my actions and thoughts, and by the entire loss of all that time which Thou hast given me for no other employment but of worshipping Thee, of seeking in all my business and applications the means of doing Thy pleasure and of becoming truly penitent for my daily trespasses, such as are common even to good men, and therefore such as require that their whole life should be one act of repentance, without which they are in danger of falling from their goodness.

IX.

HITHERTO, O Lord, I have ever been deaf to Thy inspirations, I have despised Thy oracles, I have judged contrary to what Thou judgest, I have crossed those holy maxims which Thou broughtest into the world from the bosom of the eternal Father, and according to which Thou wilt judge the world at Thy second coming. Thou hast said, Blessed are those that mourn, and woe unto those who have received their consolation. My language was directly opposite: Woe unto those that mourn, happy those who abound in consolations and enjoyments, those who possess

a plentiful fortune, a glorious name, an uninterrupted health, and unbroken vigour. And for what reason could I make these advantages the standards of happiness, but because they furnished their owners with a more large capacity of enjoying the creatures, that is, of offending Thee. Thus for health in particular, I confess, O Lord, that I esteemed it a good, not because it supplied more easy means of profiting in a course of holiness, of exhausting more cares and more watchings in Thy service, or in the assistance of my neighbours; but because under its protection I might abandon myself with less restraint to the delicacies of life, and receive a quicker relish of pernicious and fatal pleasures. Grant, O Lord, that I may reform my corrupted reason, and rectify my sentiments by Thine; that I may judge myself happy in afflictions, and that under this my disability as to external actions, Thou mayst so purify my thoughts and intention as to reconcile them to Thy own; that I may thus find Thee within myself, while my weakness incapacitates me from seeking Thee without. For, O Lord, Thy kingdom is in the hearts of the faithful; nor shall my heart be debarred from perceiving and enjoying it in itself, if it may be first replenished with Thy Spirit and with Thy wisdom.

x.

BUT, O Lord, by what means shall I engage Thee to pour down Thy Spirit upon this miserable soul? All that I have, all that I am, is odious to Thee; nor can I discover in

myself the least foundation of union and agreement. I see nothing, O Lord, but my sufferings, which have a resemblance with Thine. Look therefore on the evils I now labour under, and those which threaten me with their approach. Behold with an eye of pity the wounds which Thy hand has made. O my Saviour, who lovedst Thy own sufferings, even to death ; O God, who for no other cause becamest man, but that Thou mightest suffer more than mere man could undergo for human salvation ; O God, who wast therefore incarnate since the fall of man by sin, and didst therefore assume our body that Thou mightest feel all the evils which sin had deserved ; O God, who so lovest bodies exercised with sufferings, as to have chosen for Thyself a body loaded with the most grievous sufferings this world can exhibit, be pleased favourably to accept of my body, not for its own sake, nor for all that it contains, for all deserves Thy wrath ; but on account of the evils it endures, which alone can deserve Thy love. May my sufferings be pleasing to Thee, and my afflictions invite Thee to visit me. But to complete the preparation for Thy reception and stay, grant, O my Saviour, that as my body has this in common with Thine, to suffer for sin, so my mind may have this likewise in common with Thy mind, to be sorrowful for sin ; and that thus I may suffer with Thee and like Thee, both in my body and in my mind, for my numberless transgressions.

XI.

GRANT me, O Lord, the grace of joining Thy consolations to my sufferings, that I may suffer like a Christian. I pray not to be exempted from pain, for this is the glorious recompence of saints; but I pray that I may not be abandoned to the pains of nature without the comforts of Thy Spirit, for this is the curse of Jews and pagans. I pray not to enjoy a perfect fulness of comfort, without any alloy of sufferings, for this is the noble prerogative of a life of glory; neither pray I for a perfect fulness of sufferings without any mixture of comfort, for that is a state of Jewish darkness and misery; but I pray, O Lord, that I may feel at once both the pains of nature for my sins, and the consolations of grace by Thy Spirit, for that is the true state of Christianity. Oh, may I never feel pain without comfort, but may I so feel them together as at length to feel Thy comforts only without my pains; for so, O Lord, Thou didst leave the whole world to languish under natural sufferings until the coming of Thy Son; but now Thou comfortest and sweetenest the sufferings of Thy servants by His grace and fillest Thy saints with pure beatitudes in His glory. These are the three wonderful steps by which Thou hast been pleased to guide and exalt the works of Thy providence: Thou hast raised me from the first, oh, conduct me to the second, that I may attain the third! Thy grace, O Lord, is sufficient for me.

XII.

SUFFER me not, O Lord, to continue under such an estrangement from Thee, as to be able to reflect on Thy soul, which was sorrowful, even to death ; Thy body, which was oppressed and overcome by death for my sins ; without rejoicing if I may be counted worthy to suffer in my body and in my soul. For what can be more shameful, and yet what is more usual with Christians, and even with myself, than while Thou in Thy agony didst sweat drops of blood for the expiation of our offences, we make it our hole study to live in delicacy and ease ; that Christians, who profess a dependence on Thee ; that those who, at their baptism, renounced the world to become Thy followers ; that those who, in the face of the Church, have engaged themselves by a solemn oath to live and die in Thy service ; that those who pretend a belief that the world persecuted and crucified Thee ; that those who acknowledge Thee to have been exposed to the wrath of God, and to the cruelty of men, to purchase their redemption ; that those who make a daily confession of all this ; who consider Thy body as the sacrifice which was offered for their salvation ; who look on the pleasures and sins of the world as the only cause of Thy sufferings, and the world itself as Thy murderer, should yet seek to gratify their bodies with the same pleasures and sins in the same world ; and that those who could not without horror behold a person caressing the murderer of his ~~brother~~, by whose voluntary death the son is ransomed and

lives, should be able to find delight and complacency, ~~as~~
I have done, in the world, which I know to be the
murderer of Him whom I own for my Father and my
God, who was delivered for my releasement and safety,
and who in His own person sustained the punishment due
to my sins? It was most just, O Lord, that Thou shouldst
interrupt so criminal a joy as this with which I solaced
myself under the very shadow of death.

XIII.

TAKE from me, O Lord, that sorrow which the love of
myself may raise in me from my sufferings, and from my
unsuccessful hopes and designs in this world, while
insensible and regardless of Thy glory. Create in me a
sorrow resembling Thy own. Let my pains be, in some
measure, serviceable towards the appeasing of Thy wrath ;
let them prove the happy occasion of my conversion and
my salvation. Let me not hereafter wish for health or life,
but with the prospect of spending both in Thee, with Thee,
and for Thee. I pray not that Thou wouldest give me
either health or sickness, life or death ; but that Thou
wouldest dispose of my health, my sickness, my life, and
my death, for Thy glory, and for my own eternal welfare,
for the use of the Church, and the benefit of Thy faithful
servants, into the number of whom I hope to be admitted
by Thy grace. Thou alone knowest what is expedient
for me ; Thou art my Sovereign Master and Lord ; guide
and govern me at Thy pleasure. Give me, or take from

ine, as shall seem best to Thy providence ; but in all things conform my will to Thine, and grant that with a humble and perfect submission, and a holy confidence, I may dispose myself to receive the orders of Thy eternal wisdom, and may equally reverence and adore the most different events which Thou shalt please to accomplish in me.

xiv.

LET me with a constant evenness and uniformity of spirit embrace all Thy disposals, for as much as we know not what we ought to ask, and cannot wish one event rather than another without presumption, and without making ourselves the judges and the sponsors of that train of future things which Thy wisdom has so justly concealed from our view. I know, O Lord, my whole knowledge may be reduced to this one point, that it is good to obey Thee and evil to offend Thee. After this, I know not what is the best or the worst amongst all things. I know not which is more profitable for me, health or sickness, riches or poverty, any condition, any circumstances of this world. For such a judgment surpasseth the force and sagacity of men, and lies hidden amongst the secrets of Thy providence, which I reverence and adore, but will never attempt to trace or penetrate.

xv.

GRANT, O Lord, that in every condition I may conform myself to Thy will, and in my present sickness glorify Thee

by my pains. Without these it is impossible I should attain to Thy glory, since Thou Thyself wast not "made perfect" but "through sufferings." It was by the marks of Thy sufferings that Thou wast known to Thy disciples; and it is by their sufferings that Thou knowest who are Thy disciples. Receive me into that blessed company, by means of these evils which I endure in body and mind for my past transgressions. And because no sacrifice is acceptable to the Father unless presented by Thee, unite my will to Thine, and my torments to those which Thou didst not disdain to undergo. Let my sufferings be interpreted as Thine own. Unite me to Thyself, replenish me with Thyself and with Thy Holy Spirit. Enter into my heart and soul, there to sustain my afflictions, and continue to endure in me what is behind of Thy passion, which Thou still sufferest in Thy members till the perfect fulness and consummation of Thy body. So that being inspired and acted by Thee, it may be no longer I who live or suffer, but Thou, O my Saviour, who livest and sufferest in me; and that having thus borne some share in Thy sufferings, Thou mayst admit me to some participation of those glories which Thou hast acquired by them, and in which, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, Thou livest and reignest for ever. *Amen.*

THE END.

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